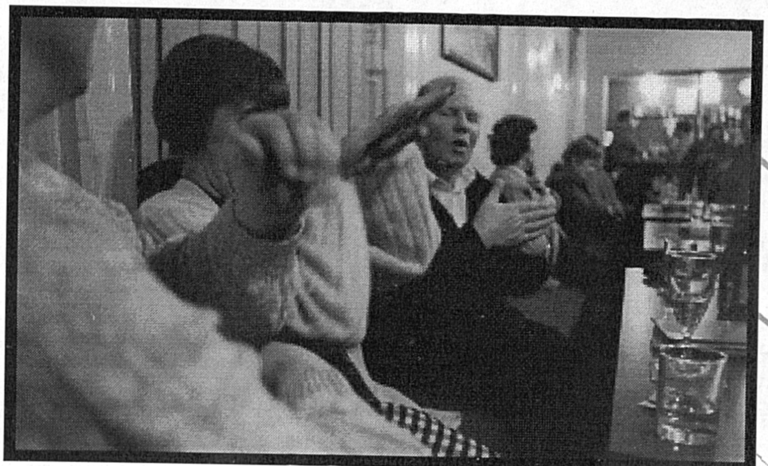

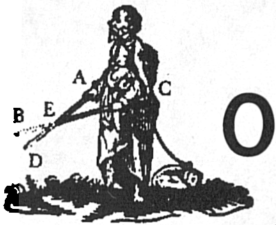

Ocularcentrism and Deaf people

a social photography project

Ernst Thoutenhoofd

Abstract

Title: Ocularcentrism and Deaf people: a social photography project
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This thesis is submitted in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Durham.

Most sociology of deafness is premised on the understanding that Deaf people are to be defined by reference to audiological status, or, in addition to this, by reference to their use of visual/gestural forms of communication. Although much of the research based on either or both of these understandings of deafness has contributed significantly to our current knowledge of deafness, neither approach I believe can satisfactorily explain the constitution of the Deaf community and what is termed the 'Deaf Way', the ways of the collective of Deaf people.

This study seeks to map new territory in exploring Deaf experience by considering the perceptual skills of Deaf people as phenomena replete with social meaning.

It is proposed that visual skills and perceptual strategies develop in social environments (explored here are a Deaf club *and a Deaf college) in which perceptual strategies and visual skills*—including spatial/iconic linguistic skills—are requisites for succesful participation in Deaf community life.

This study explores these various ideas in three photographic projects: a photo-documentary, an 'auto-photography' project, and a critical discussion of photographs placed in magazines aimed at d/Deaf audiences.

The wider aim of this explorative research is to comment reflexively (albeit implicitly through example) on contemporary treatment of the 'ocular'. In Cultural Studies more generally there is currently more focussed attention to the treatment and appreciation of the ocular in various contexts. This study contributes a more fundamental attention (fundamental in the neuropsychological sense) to ocular practices, beyond visuality as a complex of interpretive practices to vision itself (acts of looking at and seeing) and visual representation as social elements of ocular practices in their own right.

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Preface

> "The manual sign language used by the deaf is an ideographic language [...] An ideographic language characteristically uses a part of the object to represent the whole object. There are many examples of this in the sign language. Essentially it is more pictorial, less symbolic and as a system is one which falls mainly at the level of imagery. Ideographic language systems, in comparison with verbal symbol systems, lack precision, subtlety, and flexibility. It is likely that Man cannot achieve his ultimate potential through an ideographic language inasmuch as it is limited to the more concrete aspects of his experience. Comparatively, a verbal language is more abstract. Moreover, an adequate language system must include a written form. [...] In the case of the sign language, it seems impossible to devise a written form. The manual sign language must be viewed as inferior to the verbal as a language." (Myklebust 1969:241–242)

> "The 'science' of others, which celebrates speech, is so pervasive that it effectively overpowers a different knowledge, namely Deaf people's knowledge about signed language. [Deaf people's] many adjustments of theories proposed by others suggest that they find the theories of others inadequate, imbalanced, and sometimes, about the most important ideas, false. That they live with others' theories while maintaining separate theories of their own is a tribute to the powerful possibilities of their culture." (Padden and Humphries 1988:69–70)

These two contrasting quotations capture a collision of ideas and are at the same time illustrative of different ways of engaging with those ideas. Since both comments pertain to Deaf[1] people and their use of sign language, the contrast is between a particular treatment of *ideas*, put forward in the first quotation as a quite general but firm statement on the quality of two different language modalities, and the *impact* of such views—if they are pervasive or dominant— upon a group of people. Instead of setting more stakes in a debate that has continued for some time and that has in some ways passed its sell-by date, this study aims to address the nature of one important element in the constitution of both views presented above. It is an element which suffuses both viewpoints with meaning without itself being explicitly named: that element, I believe, is the visual and it has (in this study) two sides: perception and representation. In this study I want to address visual perception and representation because it is timely, possible, and will widen our understanding of the 'quality' of Deaf people's experiences. I shall in this preface address the quotations above in so far as they inform the arguments I will set out in this study.

Myklebust's quote labels sign language an 'ideographic' language. This is unfortunate because, as the term 'graphic' suggests, the meaning *ideographic* is normally reserved, as reflected in both the *Oxford* and the *Collins* dictionaries, for the graphic expression of an 'idea' or ideas in (patterns of) discrete characters. For example, written Chinese is ideographic, as is the symbol for percent

(%) or the numeral '1'. Sign language expression, however, is not ideographic. To the extent that Myklebust states that people cannot achieve their 'ultimate potential' through ideographic language it would follow that he comments negatively for example on mathematics or Chinese literacy, and not at all on the form of signed communication used by Deaf people.

Sign language is in part characterised by a certain iconic potential in the relationship between many signs and their referents, or, in the Saussurian sense, between signifier and signified (de Saussure 1993:162). This is may be what Myklebust refers to as their "pictorial" quality. Morphologically, sign language vocabulary contains both iconic and symbolic elements as well as indexical elements. All three or combinations of two of these elements will often combine within the lexicon. It has been unfortunate that de Saussure placed so much stress on the arbitrary relationship between referent and object; unfortunate in the sense that sign language researchers have occasionally tended to focus upon a perceived necessity to prove that sign languages are capable of such morphological abstraction, so that sign languages could be equated with spoken languages (Deuchar 1991). It appears to me that a productive element in the language, its potential to visualise, is therefore sometimes downplayed, leading to statements on the nature of the language which may appear oddly dissociated:

> "Use of space and movement was once thought to be only a pantomime and thus not specifically linguistic in nature. Linguistic research has shown, however, that ASL [American Sign Language] has not taken advantage of potentially rich iconic representations provided by the visual mode: instead, its spatially based structure forms an abstract system that must be considered fundamentally linguistic in nature [...] In studies of the acquisition of ASL versus spoken language, the visual modality has no distorting effect on learning among deaf children..." (Supalla 1991:86)

It appears to me that the unstated assumption in this comment is that iconic form cannot be 'linguistic' because it is not abstract, and it therefore may be reported with some relief that the visual modality has no "distorting effect" on learning. I will explore the idea that far from ignoring the potential of the visual modality, Deaf people will often exploit it, not only in the language (cf. Brennan 1990), but also in other and perhaps more fundamental ways.

In the last remark of the paragraph cited Myklebust reduces language to "verbal" expression. This study will argue that there are conceptual flaws in such a partial view of language which mean that some social phenomena grounded in visual perception are not being considered. This also contextualises the claim made by Padden and Humphries that Myklebust's science is others' science. It will be my argument that this is not only so because Myklebust is not Deaf, but because there is a link between his 'viewpoint' and a particular kind of visual perception as motivated acts of observation. This element of perspective is carried in a description of a double-consciousness that W.E.B. Du Bois marked as part of black identity:

> "Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through [...] the negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity." (Du Bois 1993:178–179).

A similar sense of double-consciousness can clearly be identified in the quote by Padden and Humphries. If Myklebust celebrates speech, then Padden and Humphries celebrate sign language. The difference here is not only one of implied historical and cross-cultural status and spread, but, as I will argue, a more pervasive, general and unconscious difference on the basis of the modality and the encoding of information (be it linguistic or otherwise) which has direct repercussions not only on knowledge itself, but also—and more importantly so—on its representation, and on knowledge as resulting from differing kinds of thought processes. The modalities and codings involved are speech, hearing and alphabetic (symbolic) representation of sound as distinguished from signing, seeing and pictorial (iconic) representation of visible elements.[2]

It seems to me that the degree to which the discourses and representations of social scientific knowledge include either set of modes and codes to the exclusion of the other set is itself a direct measure of its prejudices, a preferential attention to certain kinds of knowledge, certain paradigms of thinking, and the unconscious accepting of certain modes of thought even to the extent that some (such as that of visual perception, seeing and the act of looking) can be projected as having universal currency. The "separate theories" of Deaf people mentioned by Padden and Humphries, I will propose, should be judged in the context of such an extended discussion on the nature of knowledge and the role of visual perception in thought processes as well as in social practice. This study, then, illustrates the nature of Deaf people's visual awareness in part through the limitations of a particular kind of social science in so far as many processes in that science are processes made dependent—as is this study itself—on spoken language and alphabetic texts.

Institutional attention to being Deaf

In order to provide a sense of orientation, I will here briefly assign the kinds of academic attention that have affected the lives of Deaf people into three broad and overlapping historical blocks. I do not propose these blocks as formal history (that is, not in terms of some kind of progression or development) or as categorical, but as indexical of approaches and attitudes.

The first block, then, has all the hallmarks of Enlightenment. Attitudes towards Deaf people were mainly characterised through those of educationalists such as Abbé de l'Épée in eighteenth century Paris (Lane 1984). The intention was to 'civilise' Deaf people , to an extent out of religious fervour but also because educational attainment was a measure of civil accomplishment itself, and the education of Deaf people was judged to reflect favourably the humanist credentials of French bourgeois culture. Attention to the situation of Deaf people was therefore indeed constituted through a 'mask' of benevolence (Lane 1992). Sign language was a means of instruction, an approach, but spoken and written language skills were the target and measure of attainment. The overall focus was on the soul, in a religious sense as well as in the Cartesian sense that the soul was deemed to be the centre of human (moral) consciousness and civilising knowledge. The educationalist 'period' reaches both its peak and its nadir at a conference in Milan in 1880, where spoken language officially becomes both the mode of instruction and the educational goal of Deaf education throughout Europe, and the contributions of Deaf tutors, as well as a traditional public tolerance of sign languages, are sacrificed in the name of ideals.

The second block runs in parallel with modernity, and is mostly characterised by the approaches of the 'new' science of psychology and the advances made in medical knowledge, skill and technology. The experience of being Deaf is no longer seen in terms of the benevolent responsibility of a civilised society towards its members, but couched in terms of individual deviance and need (psychology), or approached as a generic unifying phenomenon, the inability to hear (medicine). Deafness is instituted as a personal affliction with mainly negative social effects, such as the use Deaf people make of sign language. Myklebust's text falls into this period. The contributions of science are mainly framed in terms of positivist attempts to map deafness and treat the social effects resulting from deafness as personal affliction.

The third block coincides with late-modernity, and is most characterised by attempts to map the social formation of those who are Deaf. The focus is linguistic, and much research is driven by socio-political ideas of Deaf people as a definable social aggregate, forming a distinguishable community with clear membership structures, and offering a distinct (sub-) cultural contribution propelled by a distinct natural language. The alignment is more with other minorities which have been identified mostly through processes of self-definition, in the wake of public and political struggles for women's and black people's rights. But claims in relation to the Deaf community are mainly based on references to Deaf people's use of sign language.

A map of this study

Chapter 1 deals with the attention that has been paid in social studies to Deaf people. Importantly, studies of the past decade or so have been based on two assumptions in relation to visual perception and the nature of observation that have influenced the research, and consequently, the kind of knowledge that is being accumulated about Deaf people. The discussion will not concentrate on particular studies, let alone provide a review, but will reveal those assumptions which have resulted in approaches unable to tackle the visual phenomena which are of interest in this study. As I will propose, research into 'deafness' is indicative of an often unconsious neglect or a superficial treatment of the role of visual perception in Deaf people's lives. Instead there is a focus on 'deafness' as an inability to hear sound, with its associated stress on hearing rather than on vision, on dysfuntion rather than on ability. The conclusion is that researchers have often taken observation and viewpoint for granted as being universal, undifferentiated, and therefore not a factor which affects the research method or outcome, or is indeed itself a scientific subject.

Chapter 2 is intended as an example of how results from such research can (and have been) disseminated partly in a particular representational form—the diagram—which by the very nature of its pictorial conventions has the effect of supporting statements that are being made with it by concealing representational flaws in the arguments it presents.

Chapter 3 projects a short account of discoveries in relation to visual perception, stressing its role in thought processes. It also gives an example of how visual perception can influence an entire society and its cultural output, in this case through a discussion of a study on seventeenth century Dutch painting. The purpose of this chapter is to set out the conditions by which it becomes possible to frame a culture or social group by reference to a set of visual practices which are social (including linguistic) in nature. The argument put forward here is that the Deaf community could usefully be placed in such a framework, one which subsumes the framework presented in chapter 2, in which models of Deaf community are discussed which place audiological and linguistic elements at their heart.

Chapter 4 then proceeds with a discussion of the kind of empirical support that can be found in photographic representation for the idea of a Deaf visuality, evidence for which will be presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7. In this chapter I will discuss my own (representational) approach to the visual perception of Deaf people, using photography as an investigative tool. Because there is a rather large body of literature which criticises the potential of photographs to 'mean' or 'reflect reality', I will discuss photography as a set of practices, as a practice in the social sciences, as well as a public (popular) practice. I place photographic representation in direct comparison with another form of representation—written text—and judge the strengths and weaknesses of both forms as research data in the social sciences on what I see as equal terms.

Chapter 5 reports on a photo documentary I carried out in a local Deaf club, and comments on some elements of distinct visual practice I perceived to be present in the content of the photographs I took as well as in the treatment by Deaf people of these photographs and others.

Chapter 6 reports on a project in which groups of hearing and Deaf pupils took photographs according to a specific brief. The results of that project are discussed in terms of differences found in the recording choices on the one hand and in the content on the other. In addition there is an analysis of the sets of photographs as photo-stories, reporting on how Deaf and hearing pupils re-constructed events as series of representative moments.

Chapter 7 draws upon an analysis of photographs placed in magazines which are aimed at Deaf audiences. This chapter reports on an analysis of the use of photographic representation in these magazines, as well as including cursory pointers to ways in which the information value of these representations can be judged in the light of the findings and arguments of the previous chapters.

Chapter 8 concludes the study by locating a different 'view' of Deaf community, one derived from a focus on visual perception and visual representation (through language as well as graphically) within the framework of a particular social theory, notably that which entails the idea of *habitus*, as postulated by Pierre Bourdieu. The point here is to tie the approach of this study to contemporary social theory by example, rather than to propose uncritically that to incorporate the material into the kind of social structure implied by *habitus* is merely to reach a logical or obvious conclusion.

Finally, the appendix contains the results of quantitative analyses of the material presented in chapters six and seven, presented in the form of tables. This is preceded by a discussion on the application of quantitative measures in this study. This discussion addresses the dialectic of statistics (also discussed in chapter 4 and in the opening paragraph of chapter 6), its relevance to this kind of exploratory study, and the limitations of their application.

The status of researcher and 'subject matter' in this study

In contrast to the title of Elizabeth Chaplin's book *Sociology and Visual Representation* (1994), I have termed the academic endeavour I have been engaged in 'sociology *of* being Deaf'. Elizabeth Chaplin tried to avoid the word 'of' in the title of her book because to her mind the formulation implies a certain distancing between sociology and its subject matter, as well as a static relationship. My reason for choosing 'of' is aligned with the former remark and contrary to the latter. I am not a member of the Deaf community nor am I deaf, and I do not have the desire to be either. My interest here is in the relationship between visual perception and social practices, and the visual perception of Deaf people (as witnessed in their communication and, occasionally, in commonplace actions) has been a matter of practical concern and a rich source of interest for some time. On a personal level I strongly empathise with the political struggles in which Deaf people are currently engaged, as well as being sympathetic to certain claims made by Deaf people in relation to their community and culture and their demand for rights and recognition in relation to sign language. Nevertheless, I remain both a cultural and social 'spectator', one who although supporting the club, clearly does not have the make-up required or indeed the desire to be in the team. My attempt in this work to outline a more visual aproach as part of a sociology of being Deaf is political only to the extent that I think it provides another form of support to the team, a form of support which does not focus exclusively on practices based on the use of sign language. In these two areas of academicism—the social nature of visual perception and the boundaries of language in relation to social practice and social investigation—I feel this study offers an original reconceptualisation of how certain key issues should be considered.

It is for members of the Deaf community to take or leave my conclusions in relation to the visual perception of Deaf people, or to distance themselves from them if they so wish. That does not imply a static relationship but (to borrow from computer discourse) an interface between someone who has, in this study, engaged in research into the nature of visual perception, as well as being professionally involved on a daily basis in graphic representation of sign language, sign language vocabulary and sign language notation on the one hand, and on the other the members of the Deaf community who, as I see it, exploit visual perception and pictorial representation in ways that are different, interesting, and unexplored.

I hope that I have also been mindful of the experiences of Deaf people in that I have followed an approach which has either taken for granted or suspended judgements on the experience of being Deaf when they are clearly external to the topic of this study; that is to say that I have not tried to approach the visual perception of Deaf people with the air of objectivity and covert association with a particular kind of scientific knowledge which—as feminists like Keller (1985) have argued

> "...is a male body of knowledge which constantly re-enacts the Cartesian mind/body divide in its most basic methodological moves." (Keller quoted in Chaplin 1994:11)

As the rest of this volume testifies, the reference to Descartes is apt in relation to discussions on the possibility of social scientific research into visual perception and pictorial representation, and into the visuality of Deaf people in particular.

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1 . In this volume the capital 'D' in the word 'Deaf' has been used consistently to capture specific meaning. Although there is disagreement in academic circles concerning the use of the uppercase character as a comprehensive descriptive label for (a group of) people, the reason for staying with its widespread use here is that it is how the Deaf people who are the subjects in this study define themselves. For those people the use of the capital 'D' is an unproblematic and common convention within the Deaf community, and this significant fact is recognised in the use of the capital 'D' here. In chapter 2 the use and origin of the term is discussed in more detail.

2 . For a discussion of the potential for, and desirability of, a writing system for sign languages, and a discussion of differences between notation systems and writing systems, see Thoutenhoofd 1990, 1992 and 1994.

Observation and gaze: studying deafness

1

"...the weight of evidence certainly seems to convince us that the dramatic confluence of an empirical philosophical tradition, a realistic æsthetic, a positivist attitude towards knowledge and a technoscientistic ideology through modernity have led to a common-sense cultural attitude of literal depiction in relation to vision."
(Jenks 1995a:14)

Positivist viewpoints and being Deaf

The material form of this thesis, being a bundle of bound sheets of paper imprinted with forms in black ink, results from what must be two of the most taken for granted and ordinary human abilities to be in contact with an external world: the ability to see, and the ability to manipulate objects. Indeed, so common are these abilities that not having such abilities, not seeing this thesis, or not being able to lift it off the table, open or close it, have been interpreted by many as being disabilities.

This model of human function describes a binary relationship in which ability (a function common to people) is the direct opposite of disability (not having that function). Disability in this context does not mean the experience of discrimination which brings together disabled people in political struggle for rights. The use of the word 'common' here is pivotal: the conclusion must be that if there were a vast majority of people who had no sight at all (for example, no eyes), then this thesis and all the means and activities by which it is constructed, such as the printing press, libraries, inks and paper, typewriter and word processor, but also the power and spread of orthographies and the education which is founded upon it would have been unthinkable, or things would at least have been radically different, such as the job descriptions and activities of secretaries, the first years of primary education, and the constitution and activities of specific audiences.

Of course in the world as we 'commonly' know it blind people do use paper, not imprinted with ink, but embossed with patterns of dots. We can nevertheless envisage that people without sight would have developed, given two thousand years or so, a method of communication more directly suited to hearing and touch, indeed, there would have evolved a social and material world centering entirely around their hearing, tactile and olfactory abilities: a world that would feel different to the touch, it being irrelevant that this world would not look. Human movement activity would be based on contact forms other than visual contact, most likely tactile, magnetic or (ultra-) sound contact. The spatial constructed environment, including for example accommodation would have been designed from a tactile and maybe even olfactory rather than a visual 'perspective'. It is certainly not easy for able people to imagine such a non-sight world, even aside from the intellectual Darwinist problems encountered in contemplating unsighted people's performance when subjected to evolution and survival theories, but disability theorists use similar notions with great impact. Vic Finkelstein, at the time Senior Lecturer in Disability Studies at the Open Univerity, asked students to imagine a material world populated by a great majority of people in wheelchairs during a guest lecture at Durham University (1989). In his mind all doorways, as well as ceilings in buses and buildings were a mere 1.50 metres high, and chairs without wheels were nowhere to be found.

These differently able worlds just described not only bear out how important senses and functions are to the ways environments are being explored and constructed, but also dramatically illustrate the impact of the exploitation of certain senses socially; uses of the senses are at the very heart of all material, theoretical and mental creations. The point of this observation becomes clearer when we compare descriptions of such differently able worlds to the more common academic descriptions of those same people as members of social minorities in 'the real world'. In the first kind of description the focus is on the exploitation of ability and opportunity; it is a positive approach. In the second kind of description, however, there exists a distinct focus on functional disability and the coping mechanisms and strategies associated with dysfunction, and these descriptions are most often supported by a discourse founded upon medical terms, vocabulary and assessment; it is essentially a negative approach (Finkelstein 1980 and 1988, Lane 1992, Oliver 1993, and Shearer 1981).

For example, out here in the real world we may contend that blind people's use of paper is an example of maximum exploitation of resources in an economy of availability to which they are actually of peripheral concern; in an essentially capitalist society the dominant perception is that blind people must cope, if necessary with the help of professionals, special hardware and institutions such as charities and special needs education. This is quite literally the viewpoint of a majority of perceiving, able people, who may not necessarily always be perceptive or observant, but who do possess the common ability to see.

This discussion of sight(edness) is a useful introduction to a description of much current sociology of deafness. Occasionally, studies in the sociology of deafness have operated on two assumptions which this study seeks to undermine. The first assumption is an agreement, reflected in popular opinion, that Deaf people are people who cannot hear. Obvious as this may seem, in this study Deaf people are above all people for whom visual perception rather than sound provides access to information and communication. This different description of Deaf people acknowledges a descriptive lack in the former, the working definition of much previous research into people's experiences of being Deaf.

The second assumption has been a more unconscious taking-for-grantedness that no issue could be taken with a starting-point which treats Deaf people foremost as people who cannot hear. But it is being argued here that such a view is itself informed by a particular focus on being Deaf, namely a focus on the auditory functions of many Deaf people. Although this viewpoint reflects that of a majority of hearing people, it is not one generally deemed particularly relevant by those who are themselves Deaf (Baker and Cokely 1980, Kyle and Woll 1989, Ladd 1988, Padden 1980, Padden and Humphries 1988, and Woodward 1982). Insofar as the term is understood to refer to mere handicap it is indeed sometimes strongly disagreed with (Kyle and Woll 1989:20), since it is indicative of the negative descriptions of functional disability discussed earlier. In similar vein to the discussion on sightedness, we could be sure that if the vast majority of people were Deaf, no-one would care much about sound, and hearing people would be of academic (e.g. medical and psychological) interest only.

What is being addressed here in epistemic terms is a component of positivism: an attempt to describe phenomena in structural terms, and notably in the case of handicaps such as blindness or deafness, the attempt to describe the extent to which phenomena associated with handicaps (the term here preferred for functional difference) do not fit general laws or patterns. For the positivist concerned with the social world, covering laws and patterns are of necessity those organised around the activities and beliefs of able people, since their greater number form the laws and patterns by comparison to which only it is possible to formulate and locate deviations. What makes handicap relevant from a positivist stance is therefore the degree to which the social activities and beliefs of those people with a handicap deviate from what becomes, in all but name, the norm. For the anthropologist the person whose cultural baggage looks different is the subject of research while the person whose cultural baggage looks the same is not (by whichever criteria). Similarly, for the positivist sociologist interested in social effects of handicap the person with different functional or mental ability is the subject of scrutiny, while the person with the same functional and mental ability is not (by whichever criteria). In defining such discrimination between sameness and difference, instances of the particular become the yardstick by which the norms of the general can be constructed. In order to be able to substantiate concerns with the particular as an instance of the general or at odds with it, a positivist epistemology regularly turns to quantification and measurement. In defining handicap, what becomes important is a measure of the degree of affliction of functional or mental ability, and the degree (in absolute values or percentages) to which the handicap is widespread, which is really a measure of how particular the handicap is. The scientific objective becomes to offer to Deaf people opportunities which maximise their social ability to approximate a norm, the hearing and speaking subject. At the same time this measure can be offset against the relative success differently able people have in comparison to able people in competing with them for social status, accumulation of wealth, and standards of socialisation which have been accomplished, as measured in educational attainment and relative success in the labour market. This attention to sociometrics results in a calculable or at least deducable appraisal of the success of people in a social environment in which it is difficult for them to exploit their abilities. The final result is often a public statistic used in social policy and in assessments of medical achievement aimed at preventing handicap from occurring (as for example official statistics on post-war rubella epidemics in the US).

For such statistics it becomes necessary to describe the handicap in fine detail, so as to be able to 'grade' the affliction. The argument put forward for grading is often that grading allows the research to be replicated in order to accurately reflect changes over time or across cultural boundaries, but the possibility of replication may often mainly serve to raise the level of trust in a researcher's integrity (Neuman 1994:321). Once such gradings become standardised they become available to professionals working with Deaf people, such as audiologists and educators, who can use grading to appraise the severity of a handicap and place people thus assessed at suitable locations in the various parts of the social spectrum with which they concern themselves. Deaf people may themselves associate with, or identify with, grading to the extent that the wording used appears to touch upon aspects of their experience. Occasionally grading scales may be presented, and used, as an easy means of self-testing, especially when they have been framed in concrete terms of reference, which may also have the effect of concealing the negative aspects of the approach. For an example of covert negative grading—in this case presented by a person who is himself Deaf—see the popularised grading scale running from one to ten drawn up by Dr. Jerome Schein in *A deaf adult speaks out* by Leo M. Jacobs (1974:7–8). The first grading is: "1. I can hear loud noises", and the last, number ten, reads: "10. I can usually HEAR AND UNDERSTAND a telephone conversation on any telephone." (original use of capitals). On this scale, incidentally, it is not possible to indicate that one is unable to hear loud noises. In the context of the discussion here, it would form a manifest negative. But the scale allows for infererences to be made about what a Deaf person cannot do while inviting declaratives about what the person can do. Also note in this respect the reference to the telephone, an appliance which Jacobs himself states elsewhere played no or little part in Deaf people's lives in 1974 (ibid:72).

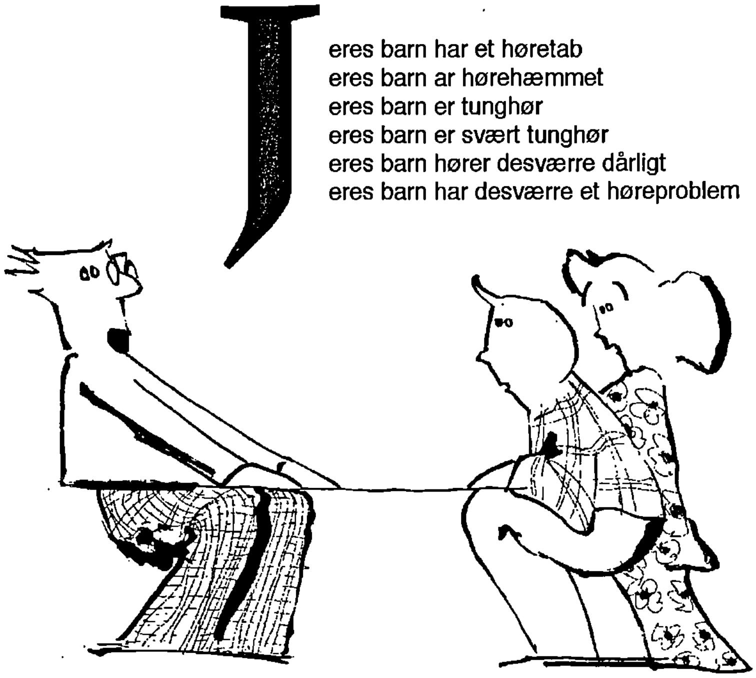

Figure 1.1
An example of the terms used for varying degrees of deafness. This cartoon was used as an illustration in a Danish article on categorising deafness and how grading confuses parents about the sensory abilities of their child (Hansen, 1989). Drawing by Ernst Thoutenhoofd.

What is thus described is a sociology which concerns itself with deafness as a functional disability, or with a measure of ability abstracted away from personal experience of it through quantification: it is not individual people who receive the attention of the researcher, but the number of individuals similarly afflicted and the degree of the affliction. In so doing the researcher's immediate concern is neither the quality of life of the number of individuals who formed the statistic, nor explicating processes of companionship to which these individuals bear witness (to borrow from the original meaning of the Latin word 'socius'). What concerns the researcher here is the behaviour and scope of an affliction as expressed in a particular, conventional academic discourse based around quantification.

Sociology of deafness as 'natural' science

Perhaps out of a desire for the research to be equated with the rigour of that of natural science, some researchers in sociology of deafness favouring quantitative methods strive for clear-cut descriptions of subject matter, so that research findings can easily be replicated. After describing deafness as the inability to hear and understand speech through the ear alone, Schein, who was also in part responsible for the grading scale of deafness decribed in *A deaf adult speaks out* continues to observe that

> "It is gratifying to note that since its introduction, this definition has gained widespread acceptance [...] An increased uniformity in the use of the term deafness means a correspondingly great increase in the value of research that makes use of the term. Apparent contradiction in results are often easily resolved by pointing out that two studies of 'deafness' are actually dealing with different phenomena." (Schein 1987:5)

There is no mention of whether Deaf people themselves agree with the concept, let alone its meaning. It is probably an oversight, but the *Dictionary of British Sign Language/English* (Brien 1992) lists no actual sign for 'deafness', although its meaning is confirmed under one of the nine entries relating to being Deaf in its 'English (guide to meaning) section'. But most disturbing in the quote by Schein is the way people are made irrelevant; deafness here is an abstraction to an objectified quality, made measurable by its standardised semantic meaning, and through the choice of words, this definition of deafness takes on the immutable quality of a natural law.

This implied universal quality means that the definition becomes inviolable. The suggestion becomes that contradictions in findings must be resolved through a critique of method or observation rather than as potentially challenging the definition itself. Contradictions which may well be indicative of personal difference are instead seen as errors on the part of the researcher having observed a phenomenon that cannot be captured under this precise label of 'deafness'. Unforeseen contradictions that might arise out of the research can therefore be quickly isolated and identified as a result of contamination of the findings by an external variable. What typifies this approach is therefore that it is exclusionary in the sense that it does not allow for differences deriving from the unique experiences of individuals as well as in the sense that it isolates a group of people on the basis of a common characteristic which is only a small part of their human identity. There is a lack of reflexivity in that a particular attitude towards being Deaf is being taken for granted, an attitude which is historically reflected in medicine and forms of institutionalisation such as segregation into special needs education (Lane 1984, Jackson 1990).

Such an approach is indicative of a more general trend which describes a philosophy of the personal tragedy of affliction only relieved by people's ability to cope in adverse environments, and forms of treatment, care, and other often unsolicited forms of attention (Oliver, 1993). This means that the approach (and research based upon it) is also unreflexive from the more late-modernist point of view which necessarily forms the backdrop of this study.

However, the above mentioned definition of deafness is not criticised in this context because it is unworkable but because while it fails to bring into play the view of Deaf people it therefore also fails to show the position of the researcher; instead of observations being made and carefully reported by the researcher—for example in the course of fieldwork—observation appears to emanate from conventional academic 'wisdom' on affliction, in this instance an inability to hear speech. Such an approach is increasingly being rejected in contemporary studies in favour of more subject oriented research designs which often include participant observation and direct interviewing. But while recent trends in contemporary sociology show increasing concern with social interpretations of perception, observation and imagery, there is nevertheless little attention to differences which might exist between that which is seen (as an activity of the sense of sight) by researchers and individuals in particular social groups and social minorities. Instead there is a more general concern with vision and visual representation as social forms in which differences in sight itself are considered to play no significant role or are not being acknowledged. The aim of this study is precisely to discuss the nature of such differences. In the context of a discussion on the visuality of Deaf peope, ignoring the potential of social diversity in visual perception is a form of blindness to a significant phenomenon on the part of the researcher.

It is also timely here to connect scientific observation to a scribing academic community. The visual sociologist Elizabeth Chaplin has argued that pictures, as narratives, are invaded by verbal language (1994:88). We do invest pictures with language, and words are part of language. But the problem here is in the danger of equating the verbal part of language with the potential to inform us while at the same time excluding other parts of language and their sources. If the verbal only—and not also sounds, percepts, touch and emotions—is deemed to contribute to what constitutes a language, it might appear to us that pictorial narratives and verbal narratives are distinct codes for distinct modes, one of which appeals to æsthetic sensibilities and the other to language capacity. However, the separation of pictorial code from verbal code on the basis of modality leads to an intellectual paradigm based on a partial or reductionist view of what constitutes a language. Support for a critique in such terms may be taken from sign languages, which are languages in a visual/gestural mode with a pictorial/verbal code.

A view of language contains a reductionist element if oral modes are deemed more precise or rather less ambiguous than visual/gestural modes, and if words are judged to be language itself.

Their written form, alphabetic orthography, has become the sole platform for scientific exchange and records. In anthropology it is customary to measure a degree of civilisation or cultural development of a 'tribe' by indicating whether or not its members make use of a form of writing, making the activity of scribbling down the verbal itself a measure of social evolution and accomplishment. Popularly, this idea is enshrined in the boardgame *'Where in the World?,'* which queries knowledge of levels of literacy attained within a population as well as knowledge of capitals and main export product. Similarly, histories of scripts often treat the development of scripts in terms of a historical progression in which more iconic forms further back in time and closer to pictorial forms pre-date supposedly more accomplished logographic or phonetic, abstract forms (e.g. Engelhart and Klein 1988). The strong association of writing with words and notably phonetics thus has a history which took place at the expense of pictorial form, despite the fact that pictures convey meaning. *Written or printed words, although not iconic referents, are themselves* pictures, a fact which is common knowledge for those working with alphabetic form such as typographers, calligraphers and type-designers as well as researchers who have conducted research into the processes involved in reading (e.g. Haber and Haber 1981).

Meanwhile, sociology has ignored and still is ignoring the contribution of typography and layout to academic narrative (Chaplin 1994, chapter 6). 'Alphabetization' has become both the main instrument and the main measure of supposedly civilising forces such as education and science (Illich and Sanders 1988); to exclude visual aspects from the concept of language can result in ignoring information on the nature of language variety, and there are examples for this even in mainstream linguistics, where until recently sign languages were regularly ignored as a topic for discussion.

Exposing the social and historically contingent construction of this literal mind perhaps constitutes an area of distinct and valuable contribution by Deaf studies and sign linguistics to the human sciences. For example, a recent volume entitled *Gesture and the nature of language* written by Armstrong, Stokoe and Wilcox (1995) challenges many of the assumptions surrounding spoken language's independence of percepts. The authors outline a theory of language evolution which points to gesture as a necessary step in and contribution to that evolution, for example in the way gesture would account for the development of syntax. Syntax is in formal (Chomskyan) evolutionary linguistics attributed to genetic determination and present as a particular brain function, and this is an attribution contested by findings in relation to the historical development of the human brain. Armstrong, Stokoe and Wilcox suggest that it is wholly likely that practical action would have been copied as symbolic although iconic gesture by early humans, for example throwing a spear or preparing food, providing basic statements of iconic quality and complete SVO (subject-verb-object) syntactic order. Gesture here accomplishes what the arbitrariness of spoken language cannot, namely linking practical (and neuro-motor) experience to language and linguistic structure. In this scenario it is no longer appropriate that spoken words should be considered less ambiguous than signs, and not only for early language; in contemporary BSL, for example, Brennan (1992) lists no less than six signs for the action of washing clothes, each one indicating with great precision the kind of action by which the clothes are being washed. The addition of facial expression, or a change in the expression of movement would add to the sign information on how dirty the clothes were, how hard they were to wash, or how tired it made the person who washed them. Each of these signs would require a long English description, since the English phrase "washing clothes" gives no clue as to how an action occurs or which action occurs other than through a conceptual move involving gross generalisation. In spoken language, the arbitrary nature of many word-concept relationships means that the general necessarily replaces the particular, so that lengthy additional statements are necessary in order to identify a particular form of, in this case, an action. This observation equally holds its own when it is argued that posture and facial expression manipulate the meaning of verbal statements, an observation made long ago by Aristotle in his book *The art of rhetoric*. If language expression can contain visual elements then a photograph can make contributions of sorts to its representation. In the case of sign language expression, photographs may become more informative and more accurate reflections than words—witness the 2,000 or so photographs in the BSL Dictionary (Brien 1992). This accuracy is due in no small part to the fact that what is captured by the camera is also available in the optic array to our eyes. It is in this area of experience that Bateson and Mead (1976) might have been able to agree on the value of photographs in anthropological research and it is a mere hint of these iconic qualities which will be explored in this study.

Writing therefore only reflects language in so far as verbal expression of language is recorded by it, which is to say that writing does not express language expression comprehensively. Writing is language insofar as it is an act of translation of experience and knowledge into complex verbal statements inscribed as conventional patterns of symbolic pictures. Photographing is language insofar as it is an act of translation (from a three-dimensional world of objects into a two-dimensional plane depicting analogons of those objects) of experience and knowledge into complex visual statements inscribed by human beings as conventional patterns of iconic picture elements which may have indexical or symbolic qualities.[1]

It may be argued in the context of a discussion of expression of knowledge and experience, that sociology—insofar as it is undertaken by "verbalisers" (Chaplin, 1994:72)—is therefore unreflexive because it demands a narrative code which makes certain phenomena 'visible' for scrutiny while obscuring others because the code demanded does not always allow for that expression to be recorded easily. The fact that University regulations for this thesis require some 80,000 words but place no demands on other kinds of pictures bears testimony to the dominance of verbal expression of knowledge in social science, and this has implications for the kinds of knowledge social science is able to reflect and address.

Social science: vision and the late-modern

Vision has already been discussed in the sense of 'the act of perceiving'. Both this meaning and the action implied are relatively uncomplicated, and the act of perceiving has therefore not traditionally been an investigative topic in the social sciences. In modernity, the operation of perception had been left to opthalmology, neuro-psychology and insofar as it concerned consciousness, to psychology and philosophy in particular. It was assumed that vision was universal rather than particular, and that therefore the act of observation, the very fundament of science itself since the very early beginnings of philosophy, was itself unproblematic, despite Plato catching a glimpse of clouds on the perceptual horizon in his now often referred to 'simile of the cave' (*The republic*). However, something has changed in the philosophy of science when it shifted from modernity to what is now referred to as the late- (Chaney 1993) or postmodern (e.g. Jenks, 1993, 1995). Literature on the neuro-psychology of perception has made significant advances on knowledge of the operation of perception as a sensual system, although these advances alone have had little effect on general science.

In the psychology of perception there was a significant post-war breakthrough in the work of J.J. Gibson (1950, 1986). His theory of ecological perception argued for an embodied, part conscious act of observation by a person who finds himself or herself in an infinite 'pool' of visual information. A person's perception makes available a visual field from which continuous selections are made as to which visual information is relevant for 'survival' (hinting at a social dimension in the decision-taking process). Yet at the same time this person is also part of the pool and potentially observed by others. For J.J. Gibson perception is a multi-directional system, the operation of which not only requires eyes and a brain, but a moving body with a moving head on top, a visible environment and, at least in the case of the human observer, the conscious realisation that one is observed while observing. This implies that perception requires both notions of 'self' and 'other'. This visual consciousness also means that other people can have more access to how we visually present and conduct our-selves than we our-selves have, and thus perception aids awareness about the relations between ourselves and our environments.

In social science, which made direct use of visual perception as acts of observation on the part of the researchers, such theories of perception contributed to a more general crisis in positivism. Observation, in its meaning as an act of visual perception, had long been taken for granted as being universal rather than particular in nature, and therefore the only concerns in relation to the notion of observation were located in its more figurative meanings, mostly as describing a particular relationship of power or trust between researcher and subject. With the idea of visual perception being particular rather than universal, relationships between researcher and subject in which the researchers judged themselves to some extent to be divorced through being engaged in 'detached' acts of observation become problematic, even while there was increasing self-reflexive recognition of the fact that social scientists are themselves placed in, and part of, the social fabric they study. This happened notably in anthropology, which has taken observation as a scientific method to its logical extremes by recording people of different (sub)cultures in what was believed to be a kind of act of relayed observation on cinemato- and photo-graphic film (see for example the various papers in Edwards 1992 and Taylor 1994).

Post world-war two the ideal of immaculate perception (apparently a term first used by Nietsche) was shattered since there was no objective observer possible when the very act of seeing was directed by continuous socially based choices and attention strategies. As suggested earlier Bateson and Mead, famous for the work they produced after exhaustive research on Balinese people in the traditional anthropological method including some 25,000 photographs (Bateson and Mead 1942), still could not agree some 40 years afterwards upon the scientific status of the photographs Bateson took in Bali (Bateson and Mead 1976), although the work is repeatedly being hailed as a landmark in visual anthropology and an example for sociology (Becker 1981 devotes an entire chapter to it, but Chaplin 1994:210 makes the same claim). In an attempt to cater to the last remnants of scientific demand for objective visual data indigenous people were handed the camera, and it was recorded with initial excitement that the filmic structure of the films that they produced resembled these peoples' language structures (Worth and Gross 1981). But these attempts were criticised too; it was claimed that the approach suffered from both methodological problems and an ontological paradox. Methodologically the scientific status of data obtained in this manner was regarded with scepticism since data were neither quantifiable nor easily replicable, and there also were qualitative queries: is a native using a sophisticated camera, sound equipment and a script still strictly speaking a native? What should s/he know about filmic conventions and techniques such as zooming and panning, what are the editing procedures, and what happens in subtitling? The ontological paradox resided in the dilemma of judging who was in these cases actually the researcher, what was being researched, and most of all: who was it done for, and why—all fundamental questions in social science. Most such productions apparently end up being shown to much wider audiences in cultural festivals and on television, where any contextual discussion is generally outside the concerns of social science but is instead framed by a concern with æsthetics and arts (Weinberger, 1994).

It appears that in sociology a kind of blissful ignorance was retained for rather longer. Auguste Comte's sociological project had been superseded by different epistemologies, most recently those of structuralism and post-structuralism, but the acts of observation which formed the main access to information remained largely untouched by changes in epistemology. The main activity of sociology, careful observation of fellow human beings, was in many commentators' minds separated from observation in natural sciences—on account of its socially specific nature—only relatively recently (Wagner 1979c, Stasz 1979, Jenks 1995). After projects in the sociology of gender (Williams 1987, Dickey 1987), knowledge (Lowe 1982, Crary 1992 and Jay 1993), and representation (for example Goffman 1979 and Goldman 1992 on advertising) opened up the complexity of visual perception and representation, sociologists have faced the band and slipped on postmodern jackets in—but surprisingly so far almost never on [2]—their publications. In the course of application in studies with both diversity in subject matter and methodological approaches, the shared terms relating to perception took on almost metaphorical meaning (Jenks 1995), and the labels 'observation', 'gaze', and 'visuality' in particular need careful description. Jenks warns against conflation of the 'seen' with the 'known' (ibid:3) and attempts to reassure the community of sociologists that the known world is still one of words and that (some) words are still theirs, an 'observation' supported by the fact that the whole volume includes no more than thirteen illustrations merely presented as visual aids in discussions of the late-modern in contemporary culture.[3]

There are, then, varying sorts of meanings relating to differing, overlapping or synonymous concepts regarding the visual. There is the 'technical' description of absorption of bundles of light from the optical array by the eye and the neurological activity that results from it, describing the process of apperception resulting in percepts. There is what is experienced by most persons using eyes (as in that which tends to change mainly colours when one puts one's sun-glasses on the nose) and which can be dangerously termed perception, vision, seeing, looking or the seen (in the process of seeing). This differs from the former mainly in that it aims to describe not a technical process but an experience. There is also the cognitive awareness and construction of the world which is supported by social experience and involves preference or choice, ego, personality and the like, which may equally be termed perception, or vision. This differs from the sun-glass seeing probably mostly by the more indirect or modest contribution of the eyes compared to the contribution of knowledge. Then there is the intake of percepts, a mode of perceiving/seeing for inquisitive reasons such as the generation of knowledge, often termed observation, sometimes the gaze. Observation carries many slightly differing meanings through association, such as with the laboratory settings of natural sciences, the observations made in medicine for the purpose of diagnoses, and in sociology the exercise of control through observation, such as the glance of the prison warden through the peep-hole in the cell-door. Then there is the term 'visuality', which is more strongly than those above associated with the social. The term differs from (a) perception and (a) vision above in that it is not consciously and individually but socially and collectively influenced. Then, finally, the use of 'gaze' stresses a strictly uni-directional, often exploitative or power-related mode of perceiving/seeing, in which multi-direction of vision is ignored, played down or made impossible by material restriction (e.g. one-way screens or social restriction such as occurs in pornography). The last three meanings in particular, here indexed under observation, visuality and gaze, are much influenced by scientific discourse itself. These meanings are not exhaustive, not mutually exclusive, not conventional, and their labels hang by a thread; such uncertainty seems itself typical of late modern academic language. In a time of exploration of phenomena long ignored in sociology the meanings of such terms cannot be strangled into the frozen description of definition, and a number of the terms under strain will be used here. Insight regarding their use in context is required when placing the study in the light of other writings.

Sociology of being Deaf

It is maybe not precisely the kind of 'gaze' which mainly thrived in gender representation and in the study of surveillance undertaken by Foucault (1991), but there is certainly a predominant direction in scientific observation. With the possible exception of animal research in biology there is little value in the natural sciences to consider any other viewpoint than that of the scientist itself in so far as 'viewpoint' refers to a vantage point in space. But in the social sciences there appears to be an option, and increasingly (such as in ethnographic film and visual anthropology) that option is being explored. Most extraordinary is that sociology has long concerned itself with the viewpoints of people, in so far as the term was associated with the meaning of the word 'opinion' and could be written down or recorded, interview style, on audio-tape; more precisely, viewpoint in sociology generally means a principled stance that a person holds towards something which can only be explored through verbal language. But viewpoint, meaning, as it were, the perceptions of someone other than one's self, or the ways in which a subject might be looking at a shared environment rather differently or specifically, has not generally concerned social scientists. While it is increasingly clear that visual social science can no longer afford to ignore that 'inside-out' view, it will be argued throughout this thesis that sociological discussions of being Deaf should equally draw upon it.

While remaining within this chapter's boundaries of a sociology of being Deaf and its epistemology, taking on the perception of Deaf people brings out two elements of the interaction between scientist and subject (outside these limits there are implications discussed in other chapters). First of all the scientist comes into view as part of the context of the study. As the researcher and his or her research focus are implicated in a complex of social relationships s/he must take a stance, that is, locate her or his position in relation to the study and those partaking in it by explicating motives, aims and objectives. Such approaches were first associated with distinctly feminist sociology, as Shulamit Reinharz's writings attest (1988, 1992), which has always interpreted 'natural scientific' research based on observation as a result of covert male dominance of the sciences. Secondly, the Deaf subjects of the study are persons partaking and investing in the study as embodied, living and perceiving beings. This means that being Deaf is a communicated and interpreted subjective experience from which it is more difficult to make reference to abstractions like 'deafness'. Whether that experience is positive or negative is no longer the outcome of a calculation involving the results of an affliction and covering laws, but the result of tension and interplay between the insight of the scientist and the information provided by Deaf people coupled with the stated purposes of the research project. The motivations and beliefs of Deaf people have a definite role and status in social research reports commenting on being Deaf, and therefore the boundaries of the community in which these motivations and beliefs surface and are perpetuated or at least maintained need to be traced. Deaf researchers in particular have made some noteworthy contributions here (e.g. Padden and Humphries 1988, Ladd 1988).

A sociology of being Deaf as envisaged here therefore has as its starting-point social phenomena as exemplified by lived experience rather than the abstractions of a disembodied affliction. It is characterised by a methodology more concerned with qualitative approaches which require a different outlook and application. Its findings will be particular rather than general, will not cover a set of mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories, and are not able to support an ideological and verbal discourse centering on coping ability, affliction and disablement.

This is not to say that the study is unscientific; although the conditions of the study cannot be replicated its methodology can be, and findings can always be used to locate the dynamics of Deaf experience and the conditions that secure its survival diachronically and across cultures. Both the research approach followed here and its findings are illustrative (in the pictorial sense of the word) of particular social experience and indicative of particular knowledge of the world and in this sense both are entirely subjective.

Sociology of being Deaf in late-modernity

The alignment of this study with the postmodern project as it is evolving today appears to be somewhat incidental, if not accidental. This is not to say that the study can or should be isolated from it, or that it is not informed by similar concerns as are being addressed in works set against a more explicit postmodernist background. However, it is incidental in that the assumptions that underlie this study, and there are inevitably many, are not strictly dependent on an epistemology of postmodernity, and it is certainly the case that its concerns are of a different order. Without either having the desire or feigning the ability to write a comprehensive history of postmodernism or of the sociology of deafness, it is nevertheless necessary to point out where there is important convergence and divergence. In the literature of deafness there have been many references to Deaf people's disposition towards the visual (for a notable contribution see Sacks 1991). For example, Carol Erting notes that to her it is clear that:

> "...two themes structure the lives of Deaf people in fundamental ways: deafness is primarily a visual experience; deafness results in dependence on those who are not Deaf." (Erting 1987:130)

While the second theme would be open to contestation and is almost symbolic of the viewpoint from which it was written, the first is likely to find widespread support from Deaf people. Although part of the explanation for the first observation can be found in the use a group of Deaf people make of sign language (referred to as British Sign Language or BSL in the UK), it should be made clear that not hearing (much) sound demands that other cognitive strategies for exploration of the environment be applied. To Deaf people this is so obvious that often it is hearing people who appear to behave strangely:

> "Imagine Jim sitting in a room near a door. Suddenly his mother appears, walking purposefully to the door. She opens the door, and there is a visitor waiting on the doorstep. But if the child opens the door at another time, odds are that no visitor will be there. How does the child, who does not hear the doorbell, understand what the stimulus is for the odd behaviour of opening a door and finding someone standing there? We can only guess." (Padden and Humphries 1988:21)

This means that such exploitation of vision does not merely occur while there is linguistic exchange, but rather more continuously, and likely with a higher degree of awareness:

> "Because a Deaf person requires as much information as a hearing person, a basic goal for Deaf people is to acquire information and to communicate with others in the most effective way possible, both to avoid visual fatigue and to free their visual attention for the next activity or demand. This goal is not peripheral; rather, it is a central organising principle for their lives. Success in achieving it is necessary in a world in which effective information processing and management are keys to survival." (Erting 1987:131)

Deaf people have to gain a lot of mileage out of the sight of two eyes, and this is done by applying particular strategies of perception. Some of these strategies even involve other people's sight. For example, while doing conversation analysis with Deaf people in Oulu, Finland, Paul McIlvenny and Pirkko Raudaskoski (1994:278) tentatively suggested that relevant information in a conversation might be read off the face of the recipient of an utterance by a third person who could see the face of the recipient, but not in time the signing of the producer of the utterance because of the particular spatial arrangement of those engaged in interaction. It will be readily understood that vision as it is implicated in socio-linguistic argument here is qualitatively different from the arguments implicating vision in the 'cultural turn' of late-modernity. The vision exploited by Deaf people has both social substance and content, there is a particular intent in its application and this vision can be (and here is) the subject of social analysis in its own right. By contrast, the immaculate perception of positivism or the manipulative iconoclasms of the postmodernist commodified vision-turned-spectacle addresses sensibilities of western society and crises in our scientific methods or at least a distinct academic hype (Chaney 1994) based on re-interpretations of cultural significance. This vision is close to the original Greek meaning of the word 'theory', but worked into an entirely verbal academic form with an alphabetic code, and this vision can best be addressed by locating its phenomena in the operational, guiding structures (the 'covering laws' of sociology) of a material and cognitive social world, such as for example current discussions of theatre and spectacle, voyeurism and pornographic iconography.

Similar divergence and equal confusion of terms occurs here in the realm of the picture and the image. There is great overlap in the meanings of picture and image. A picture or image is here referring, unless otherwise stated, to visible graphic form, be it iconic, indexical or symbolic in Peirce's sense, as a foreground set off against a background of receptive surface—for example a photograph, an abstract painting, a printed word, or, for that matter, such forms as appear on Rorschach cards. A mental picture or image is a similar construct, not part of a surface but instead existing in the brain, and therein logically linked to meaning. 'Image' can furthermore refer to meanings captured in such expressions as 'self-image' or 'group-image' most often used in psychology, or, most widely applicable here, to any kind of picture while in 'social circulation' (that is, being available, consumed, and subjected to continuously changing meanings and interpretations during its use). While a general conclusion drawn in writings on the postmodern is that images have become pervasive to such an extent that they have become cheap currency, or have come to determine and create rather than reflect symbolic meaning (a conclusion drawn most popularly by Barthes 1977:45–46), the argument put forward here is that pictorial referents in photographs are indeces of relevant social phenomena. Although seemingly obvious, this argument faces the onslaught of writings which treat photographs as so many symbolic instances of a popular perception (e.g. Spence and Holland 1991, Hevey 1992, and Holland 1992).

But there is convergence too. The study leans heavily on the methodological conclusion that sociological research must of necessity be from a 'perspective', and that science itself is a form of activity with no more claim to exactitude or verity than more vernacular or artisitic activities addressing knowledge. The study also shares with the late-modern era an underlying realisation that seeing is of necessity a social act, and that this fact flaws even the most vigorous and sensitive methodological approaches for the simple reason that the seen represents both our main personal and subjective contact with the external world and our main source of scientific investigation (with the possible exception of quantum physics, which relies on extensive visual metaphor instead), although the study capitalises on the same fact by taking cultural determination of vision as a starting point.

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1 . The surprising degree to which iconic patterns are conventional can be deduced from Goffman's (1979) discussion of photographs in advertising and the ways in which gender status and difference are registered in iconic and symbolic pictorial form.

2 . This observation illustrates the marginal status of the visual even in scientific discussions of the postmodern. Although the postmodern is subject of many an academic tome, cover design, typography and layout are governed by conventional marketing principles in which postmodern designs make little economic sense. Few academic authors on postmodernism appear to be conversant, alas, with postmodern form in visual matter such as jacket design. The pictorially 'postmodern' became a hot topic in the Eighties; by 1986, during a conference in the Netherlands on graphic design, a successful Dutch designer, Gert Dumbar, found himself forced to negotiate being labeled postmodernist, meaning that in the eyes of at least some designers he had 'sold out' the craft of graphic design to the a-functionality of fine art. At the time, postmodernism in graphic design seemed to indicate a conspicuous disregard for purpose and content in favour of 'mere' striking form and random exploitation of new technology. Designs were thought to reflect postmodernism in form, content, and professional practices and attitudes, and were often referred to as "pomo", a word with derogatory connotations. Such design is hardly, if ever, witnessed in the jacket design of academic publications.

3 . Jenks applies the term 'phono-logo-centrism' in the process, which suggests that words are formed by phonemes (or cheremes in sign language). True as this may be for spoken and signed language, as Jenks is in fact refering to

the book itself, it might just be wrong for orthographies. Recent studies of the reading process propose that what is read by an accomplished reader is a word-image, which is linked to relevant concepts in the brain. This view is opposed to traditional theory, which indeed stated that what the reader picked up was a series of characters corresponding to sounds, chaining up into a lexical item. Gerrit Noordzij (1993) suggests that applying gestalt theory in an analysis of percepts of print, gives convincing support for the word-image theory. The relevance of this footnote lies in the implications: the first theory is based on formal linguistic principles, the latter more on the psychology of cognition, with a distinct focus on perception. The traditional theory of reading is further undermined by recent thinking grounded in sign linguistics. The arguments brought forward by Armstrong et al (1995), for example, place phonology, as part of formal and Chomskyan linguistics, squarely in a structuralist tradition in which language is reduced to mere structure: 'phonemes' melt in any utterance. This aside is thus a reminder of the level of complexity involved in discussing the visible and visually known world and its tangent plane with language.

Perspective and viewpoint: describing the Deaf community

2

> "Our recent invention of speech cannot entirely bury an earlier heritage. Primates are visual animals par excellence, and the iconography of persuasion strikes even closer than words to the core of our being." (Gould 1991)

> "Vision is an activity, not a neurological event: it is we who see, not our eyes." (Wartofsky 1980)

Literal descriptions of Deaf communities

The previous chapter provided a discussion of a particular characteristic of studies in sociology of deafness of a recent era, namely their predominantly verbal and numerical approaches to processes of observation and perception. An alternative approach to observation was offered in its place, based on a different and more complex visual empiricism. In the previous chapter it was also argued that any scientific approach is necessarily the result of a particular kind of perception as well as a particular viewpoint. The implication is that the activity of describing itself can no longer be seen to be a value-free act in the process of doing social science (cf. Denzin 1994:501), and visual perception becomes subject to scrutiny: this chapter aims to provide a general example of such critical attention to visual perception in a diagrammatic representation of Deaf communities. Also addressed in the previous chapter through the discussion of sociology of deafness was the argument that a 'crisis' in the idea of immaculate perception marks a mostly methodological issue in the social sciences with epistemic consequences. It is the attention to this crisis which locates this study within a poststructural and postmodern discourse.

This chapter concentrates on an area of interest in studies of deafness in order to provide an example of the application of a sociology of being Deaf which is informed by the social nature of visual perception. The area of interest is descriptions of the Deaf community, in this case the British Deaf community. Chapter 5 offers an empirical approach as it explores visual characteristics of a Deaf club, seen from the viewpoint of a cultural outsider who is not Deaf. It will be argued here that descriptions of Deaf communities to date have mostly been based on a particular form of observation which marks (post)positivist sociology of deafness, concentrating largely on the importance of the linguistic aspects of being Deaf and social aspects relating to language issues. Descriptions of Deaf communities are therefore informed by a 'literal' approach to the experiences of being Deaf, whereas it will be proposed that a more visually perceptive approach can both strengthen and broaden our understanding of Deaf communities.

The British Deaf community

Baker and Cokely (1980) record a shift in theoretical approaches to defining deafness, away from a clinical-pathological model towards a cultural/linguistic minority model of deafness. This historical shift involves the concept of Deaf culture with a capital 'D'. The use of a capital 'D' has become widespread within a certain literature advocating concepts of Deaf culture (Brien 1981, Brennan 1992, Padden 1980, Padden & Humphries 1988, Sacks 1991, et cetera) following an article by James Woodward (1972).

The use of 'D' is intended to group together, socially and culturally, people who are variously seen as sharing a sign language, who display certain attitudes towards a community of Deaf people, who share a commitment to a community of Deaf people, who are seen to be 'included' in a community of Deaf people by other members of that community, and who engage in cultural practices and expression valued within that community. In alignment with the kind of sociology of being Deaf outlined in the previous chapter, this cultural/linguistic view of deafness is in sharp contrast with definitions of deafness which treat the experience mainly as a personal affliction (e.g. Schein 1987).

> "Being Deaf usually means the person has some degree of hearing loss. However, the type or degree of hearing loss is not a criterion for being Deaf. Rather, the criterion is whether a person identifies with other Deaf people, and behaves as a Deaf person. [...] But the most striking characteristic of the culture of Deaf people is their cultural values—these values shape how Deaf people behave and what they believe in." (Padden and Humphries 1988:95)

An important effect of operating definitions of deafness using cultural concepts is that it then becomes necessary to place boundaries on a community of Deaf people: some people are 'culturally Deaf' and are included, others merely cannot hear and are excluded. Defining such boundaries is not an easy task:

> "Adequate statements of what the deaf community consists of have proved to be notably elusive for students of the literature. The term 'community' to some extent identifies a separateness of existence and mode of operation which people have found difficult to use to describe deaf people." (Kyle and Woll 1989:5)

Although the use of the capital 'D' has served well to help shape political debates in relation to experiences of being Deaf[1], recently the use of the 'D' is being openly debated. At least one commentator has cast doubt on the very existence of Deaf culture, when she notes that

> "...empirical research has not established that 'Deaf culture' exists or what form it takes if it does exist. The indiscriminate use of these terms, I assert here, does not aid the analysis and description of Deafness as a social phenomenon, or further the cause of those Deaf people who are seriously questioning the definition and meaning of Deafness." (Harris 1995a:12)

Contrary to what Harris may think, use of the terms culture and community have hardly been indiscriminate in relation to the Deaf community; there exists a large body of academic and popular discussions on their precise meaning and interpretation in relation to the Deaf community, and students of Deaf studies in the U.K. are expected to develop a thorough understanding of their definitions as sociological concepts before the Deaf community is discussed, which also involves references to mainstream sociology (D.S.R.U. 1994:11–15), such as work by Cohen (1985) and Geertz (1973). The problem is rather that Deaf studies has to date virtually ignored empirical investigative approaches to descriptions of the Deaf community and its culture as a social construct, instead concentrating on British Sign Language use in the community from a linguistic point of view and settling mostly for theoretical discussions as far as sociology is concerned.

For example, Graham H. Turner (1994), similarly describes a confusion of the respective meanings of community and culture in many descriptions of Deafness. The confusion appears to be that members of the Deaf community are currently being defined by reference to expected, typical features of socio-cultural behaviour and beliefs, and Deaf culture is defined, through a causal relationship, with reference to its community-members, who partake in certain practices and expressions which together are believed to constitute Deaf culture. Turner argues that this self-supporting dependency has resulted in 'bingo-model' approaches in discussions of who are perceived to be members of the Deaf community (1994:111). Turner's article occasioned a wave of responses, printed in two consecutive issues of the journal *Sign Language Studies* (Stokoe 1994a, 1994b).

The main contribution of the debates which are taking place in this respect is that it has become clear that the current widespread use of capital 'D' cannot serve as a shorthand academic summary of the experiences of those who are Deaf.[2] However, the capital 'D' is being applied consistently throughout this volume. Although there may be disagreement on the character as a descriptive label for (a group of) people, the reason for staying with its widespread use here is that it is how the Deaf people who partook in this study without exception define themselves. For those people the use of the capital 'D' is an unproblematic and common convention within the Deaf community and this significant fact is recognised in the use of the capital 'D' here.

A model of deafness and its pictorial perspective

The description of the various social phenomena attributed to and associated with the Deaf community and its culture requires first of all that members of that community be located, and so there have been many attempts to draw up sets of what are alternatively named criteria, avenues or ingredients for membership of the Deaf community (see, for example, Baker and Padden 1978, Baker and Cokely 1980, Padden 1980, Kyle and Allsop 1982, Kyle and Woll 1989, and Kyle 1990). Because some criteria are deemed to be more important than others, there evolved a complexity model with levels of absorption into the community which researchers thought to be best represented by diagrams. One relatively straightforward diagram, originally shown in Baker and Cokely (1980), is reproduced below.

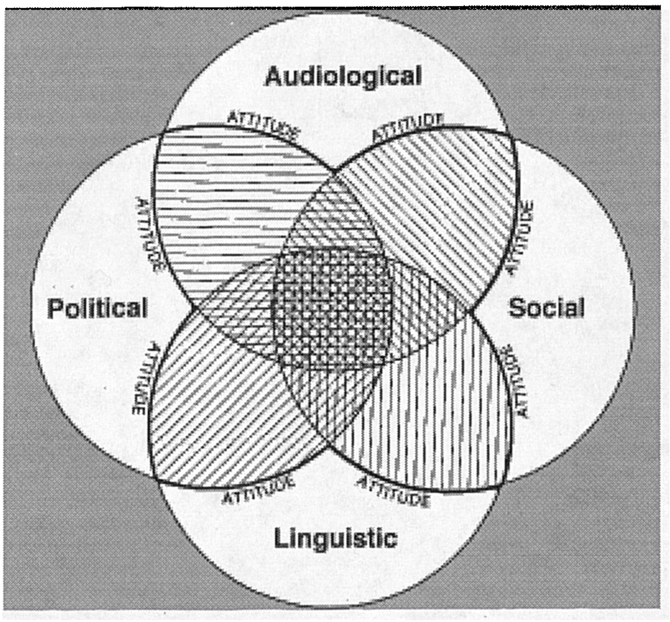

Figure 2.1
Baker and Cokely 1980:56. *Avenues to membership in the Deaf community.*

As far as Baker and Cokely could judge there are four elements involved in Deaf community membership, namely audiological, linguistic, social and political elements. These stand for the degree of deafness of a person, the person's language choice, the person's complex levels of participation in community life and activities, and the person's political allegiances in relation to the community and its needs. Together these elements, Baker and Cokely propose, are the source of a particular attitude towards being Deaf, towards community membership and towards Deaf culture. Most noticable in this model is a 'central core', formed by people who are both Deaf and severely deaf, who use sign language rather than spoken language or visual/gestural systems in supplement to a spoken element, who have strong political allegiances with the Deaf community and its causes, and who conform socially to the expectations of other members of the Deaf community rather than the expectations of hearing people. Outside this central 'core' people can show more or less alignment with this description, placing them accordingly within the model.

In the model provided here, all elements carry equal pictorial weight, although some form of stress is reflected by 'overlap' between elements. The forms are expressions of mental ideas through application of geometry rather than reflecting or capturing aspects of lived experience pictorially. This is to say that there is only a very shallow representation of a simple symbolism, a kind of minimal reference which brings to mind the symbol of the Olympic rings, the full symbolism of which can only be grasped through additional (verbal) explanation. In both cases, elementary forms are placed in a precise pattern to symbolise both interlocking and overlapping but are unable to make any further pictorial statement. As pictures, they could symbolise weather conditions in the Pyrenees as much as anything else. In subsequent models, researchers have attempted to redistribute the impact, value or weight of each element in accordance with their perceptions, findings or research focus, but most later diagrammatic models are variations which can be traced back to the same original representation in Baker and Cokely.

There is a clear relationship in the underlying philosophy on the nature of observation, discussed in the previous chapter, and the effect this has on the diagrammatic representation shown here. Although fluid, this model results in a sort of grading—more appropriately termed shading here—in this case of the experience of being Deaf rather than a degree of affliction, reminiscent of the grading of deafness following mostly quantitative approaches. The uses such a model might offer are also similar to those of scales of hearing loss. By carrying the pragmatic implications too far (rather than making the paradigmatic implications which the researchers aimed to raise explicit), the model takes on qualities of a measuring device which accords people places socially, much like audiologists do medically using scales of hearing loss.

Naturally, the significance of this diagram is in the fact that what was proposed with it was a description of the Deaf community as a result of a positively different approach to significant factors in the lives of Deaf people, and this approach has had an empowering effect on Deaf communities. But the objection raised here to models like this one relates to pictorial conventions used in the construction. In line with the nature of observation as an act of immaculate perception, this model is a visual representation based on a uni-directional outward gaze, what in this context might be called the scientific gaze. In important ways it operates like an Italianate Renaissance painting, suggesting a particular pictorial narrative ('istoria') from a definite point of view located well outside the picture plane. As a depiction of the Deaf community, the perspective provided is one located well outside it; it is located within a scientific community which often seeks to express complex mental constructs through the abstractions and reductionism of geometric form.

Pictorially the model itself, taken in isolation from the original text, is less descriptive than it is prescriptive; much like tables in quantitative approaches it does not aim to describe a community as much as it spatially prescribes members of that community a 'place', a shading of proximity to an ideal mean or centre. It looks a bit like a description of a Deaf universe, inviting the imagination to add people moving along trajectories on the basis of four kinds of forces; reference to such a paradigm adds a certain lack of control, a sense of contingency to it all. Like the narrative form of these chapters, the 'author' of the model is absent but the voice everywhere, like a god who created this universe of Deaf people.

The comparison with Italian Renaissance should not be taken as incidental. The particular pictorial construction of work produced in this period has hardly been challenged either pictorially or as criticism, which it why:

> "...it has proved difficult to find appropriate language to deal with images that do not fit this model." (Alpers 1989:xx).

In discussing the pictorial form of this model we are necessarily crossing boundaries between science and art. Description does not only take place in language, and neither does narrative:

> "...it was essential to the Renaissance æsthetic that imitative skills were bound to narrative ends. The 'istoria', as Alberti wrote, will move the soul of the beholder..." (Alpers 1989:xxi)

Alberti has been credited with defining the particular pictorial form ubiquitous today. A Renaissance scholar, Alberti's influence finally caused 'picture-point' perspective, with the picture plane as a sort of mediating prism separating viewer from object, to be officially installed in the program of the Academy. This significant fact means that the particular approach to pictorial representation is currently referred to as 'Alberti's window'.

Models of deafness and pictorial perspective

The philosophy relating to the cognition of pictorial perspective with which people in western society currently operate has been strongly attibuted to Descartes. It has often been labelled 'Cartesian perspective', for example by Jay (1993:69), who uses the term as a shorthand for the character of the dominant scopic regime of the modern era, which is to suggest that we still see in ways first suggested by Descartes in his works *Optics* and *Discourse on method*.

It is ironic that perception has been explained since Simplicius (Jay 1993:74) by reference to those we now label disabled, and it appears to be of an almost credible justice that those 'disabled' people put us right on some of our most serious misconceptions. Figure 2.2 is included in René Descartes' *Optics* (1993:66) as a diagram which draws a direct analogy between the senses of touch and vision.

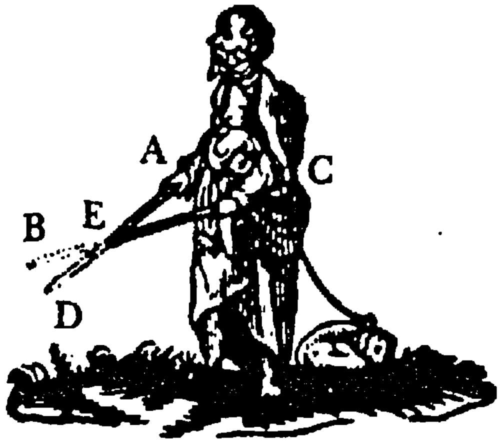

Figure 2.2
René Descartes (1993:66): Diagram of the sense of perception as illustrated by a blind person.

The idea on which the diagram is based is one of the senses as literally 'in touch' with an external world. Visual perception is here aligned with the haptic perception of blind people. However, in complete disagreement with Socrates' statement that "nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses", Descartes linked percepts to innate ideas which were governed by language. In so reasoning Descartes described looking as a mere bodily function, with cognitive perception being a higher faculty of the level of language located in the soul:

> "We know for certain that it is the soul which has sensory awareness, and not the body..."
> (Descartes 1993:61)

Diderot's assessment of Descartes' anti-optical vision in his *Letters on the blind* was that "Neither Descartes nor those who have followed him have been able to give a clearer conception of vision"

(Diderot quoted in Crary 1992:60). While Descartes assumed that movements caused during perceptions quite literally stirred the soul into awareness, the more anti-ocular Diderot dethroned the soul in favour of visual/linguistic interpenetration, in his *Letters on the deaf and dumb* of 1751 (Jay 1993:102). The effect this had was to further separate the observer from the world (*res cogitans* from *res extensa*, Crary 1992:46), giving the eye the status of a mere piece of equipment. Descartes even suggests a self-conducted demonstration of the principle of vision using a camera obscura and "the dead eye of a newly dead person" (ibid:47).

In Cartesianism perception is equally strongly linked with science and scientific observation, since what Descartes described was the 'pure' immaculate perception exploited in positivism. It is Descartes who in his theories secured the very possibility of pure description through his understanding of the operation of the eye. The diagram in *Optics* which explained the physiology of the eye and principles of geometric optics in particular was enormously influential. Descartes' *Sixth Discourse in Optics* established vision as a purely natural event, placing its theory outside history. The Cartesian eye was disembodied, fixed, and spectatorial, and the scopic regime resulting from such an ontology of vision still rules today. Thus, in writing about bourgeois perception in 1982, the cultural historian Lowe could write:

> "Sight is always the perception of surface, from a particular angle. But sound is that perception able to penetrate beneath the surface. For example, [...] speech is a communication connecting one person with another. Therefore, the quality of sound is fundamentally more vital and moving than that of sight." (Lowe 1982:6).

It is clear that such a strong dissociation of vision from language as witnessed here and propagated by Diderot, in parallel with a singular association of language with sound would leave a Deaf person not only speechless but also cognitively blind, since vision here is no more than a cursory experience, lacking both information and depth. Such odd descriptions of the shallow meaning some senses are deemed to have to embodied existence are frequent and often unfortunate. Until the recent discovery of the body itself as a site of social control, manipulation and conflict resulting directly from increasingly insistent feminist contributions to social science over the last decades, both the body and the senses were absent as investigative topics in their own right:

> "The body has been absent from classical sociology in the sense that the discipline has rarely focussed on the body as an area of investigation in its own right. [However], its concern with the structure and functioning of societies, and the nature of human action, has inevitably led it to deal with aspects of human embodiment." (Shilling 1993:9)

This recent sociology of the body takes a position which is radically opposed to that of positivist stance witnessed in Lowe's quote. Most importantly there is a recognition that the ways in which we perceive (realising cultural difference) are affected by social relations. In the case of a person being Deaf, this is to argue that a life spent around visual themes (Erting 1987, Sacks 1990, Harris 1995a) would have dramatic impact on social relations:

> "...our senses, knowledgeability and capability to act are integrally related to the fact that we are embodied beings. Social relations may profoundly affect the development of our bodies in almost every aspect; in terms of their size and shape and in terms of how we see, hear, touch, smell and think..." (Shilling 1993:10–11)

Denigration of the visual is equally common in discussing pictorial representations. In a treatise on popular photography, Hirsch (1981) wrote:

> "...we recognise, finally, that the picture, like the faces we see on the television screen when the sound has been turned off, tells us only the barest of narratives..." (Hirsch 1981:6)

For Deaf people, these are the words of the truly handicapped person, caught in a verbal corner of the world in which language is stripped to the bare essentials and only sounds are left. It is such anti-visual posture which defines a scopic regime in which Deaf people can only logically be seen in the light of handicap and disability, and which places audiological ability at the heart of a model of the Deaf community. Diagrams are typically Albertian in their pictorial conventions and Cartesian in that they aspire to pure description to be interpreted by the 'soul' of Alberti's istoria and the language of Diderot. Albertian windows on the Deaf community are not the transparent descriptive windows on the world of Deaf people they purport to be but one-way research mirrors in which the gaze of a researcher following a particular research agenda is fixed upon Deaf people in what can perhaps most accurately be described as a virtual laboratory setting. Ironically, the pictorial elements, borrowed from the 'descriptively pure' sciences of mathematics and geography, give them an air of scientific accuracy which serve effectively to hide their perspectivalist construction.

This criticism may generate little empathy. After all, a modest diagram like Baker and Cokely's often merely serves to illustrate a particular cognitive model set out elsewhere in the text. In the light of an approach to a sociology of being Deaf which implicates visual perception in the research dynamics, there is nevertheless a weakness in such diagrams. Their Albertian narrative puts them forward as literal models proscribed by an omniscient (albeit unconsciously) researcher, and the Cartesian perspective to which they make reference is out of step with a poststructuralist or postmodern sociology in which researchers need not only to describe their relationship to their informants or subjects but also make note of how their observations might differ from those of their informants or subjects. A postmodern diagram of the Deaf community which seeks to make reference to differences in visual perception should ideally, following Iversen's (1994) discussion of diagrams of perception, include an 'atmospheric surround' in which the viewer is not a surveyor but a partaker in a complete spectacle, occupying a small and shifting coordinate of sight. A social interpretation of vision indeed becomes such a complex, convoluted construction that a diagram may prove to be too simple and abstract to reflect it, precisely because it is created with elements borrowed from the sciences of mathematics and geography.

Stevin and Comenius

That diagrams are not always wholly based on the kind of abstract symmetries of geography and mathematics becomes clear in the use of diagrams in the work of two seventeenth century Dutch scholars, Simon Stevin and Johann Comenius. Lenk and Kahn (1992) show that these two men made significant contributions to the way diagrams work by exploiting visual knowledge. This is a significant move away from the kind of diagram described above which requires an act of cognitive manipulation entirely based on verbal criteria. For example, Lenk and Kahn write of one of Stevin's diagrams that:

> "It was Stevin's unique contribution to place his visually abstract, geometric explanations in the context of objects already known to the reader from his everyday experience. The horse pulling a heavy wagon up the hypotenuse of a triangle, two men carrying a rectangle with a visible centre of gravity first along a flat surface and then up a hill: these are a few of the many fine illustrations Stevin created to accompany his treatise." (Lenk and Kahn 1992:277)

Equally, in the teaching books of Comenius, illustration becomes an integral part of explanation, parts of the illustration were often numbered, and categorisation took place accordingly:

> "The Orbus Pictus intended for the youngest pupils introduces words in thematic groups. The student experiences the world as an ordered collection of utilitarian things and the textbook reflects and reinforces this experience while introducing new words to express what the student already knows. Illustration is an important part of this pedagogy." (Lenk and Kahn 1992:279)

That both scholars lived in the Netherlands is not mere coincidence. As will be shown in the next chapter, the Netherlands at the time was a culture which was based on visual perception and in which the pictorial 'art of describing' became a standardised and conventionally understood mode of framing both experience and knowledge. This is precisely what these diagrams do here; they frame knowledge in a visually accessible (figurative or realistic) depiction based on common experience, creating a diagram that communicates in part through visual perception and shared, understood experience. It is these qualities, and such lack of symbolic imagination as witnessed in Baker and Cokely's model taken as example here, that are crucially missing in current diagrammatic representations of the Deaf community more generally.

An ocularcentred view of the Deaf community

It is clear that British Sign Language is very important to all Deaf people partaking in this study. Invited to write a brief comment with photographs she liked most, one Deaf person, Helen, commented on a photograph she had taken of a friend who was signing:

> "See his personity and he is sign not pose and it looked natural!" (chapter 6 photograph 105, first choice)

Note especially the link Helen makes between personality, the use of sign and coming accross naturally. Similarly, Melanie's reason for choosing a particular photograph was that

> "Susan sign her name with her left arm." (chapter 6 photograph 60, fourth choice)

There has been very little attention in the research to this aspect of sign language use, probably because linguistics has little concern with the expression of personality as part of language, which is probably deemed more of psychological interest. Maybe that is why the neurologist Oliver Sacks ingeniously and poetically captured this property of sign languages when he wrote that:

> "...signing is not just the manipulation of symbols according to grammatical rules, but, irreducibly, the voice of the signer—a voice given a special force, because it utters itself, so immediately, with the body. One can have or imagine disembodied speech, but one cannot have disembodied Sign. The body and soul of the signer, his unique human identity, are continually expressed in the act of signing." (Sacks 1990:121–122)

What is nevertheless striking in the remarks made by the Deaf people is that finding personality (or character) in signed expressions is both natural and important to them. In fact, the presence of the 'voice of the signer' may be one of the reasons that Deaf people will always relatively effortlessly recognise hearing signers who have learned BSL as a 'foreign' language. Using an analogy in painting, what distinguishes someone who has painted persistently since the age of three and for whom painting is an important form of expression (and maybe income) from someone who has taken it up as a hobby a year ago, is the relative degree, ease, and quality of the expression of personality and pictorial narrative they are able to exhibit in their work. Similarly, Deaf people may expect other Deaf people to 'naturally' intimate personality, iconic resourcefulness and ease of expression to an extent they would be surprised to find in the expressions of hearing people. There is a very intimate relationship here between body, awareness of self and linguistic expression. Jennifer Harris describes an experience in learning the language as follows:

> "BSL is a wonderful language to watch, the ease of flowing movements and the expression given by Deaf people is really fascinating. Watching hearing people attempt to emulate it is rather like listening to Les Dawson playing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony." (Harris 1995c:298)

Even though hearing people may gain 'intermediate' or even higher level qualifications in BSL skills and be perfectly fluent signers effortlessly communicating with Deaf people, they may never even be able to appreciate, let alone master, exactly how and how much, a Deaf signer who has grown up using BSL is able to connect language and language expression to personality and self the way other Deaf people may. To the extent that this holds true, it would seem that this constitutes one of the more difficult aspects of the Deaf community to be described, analysed and interpreted.

Sacks' reference to the uniqueness of human identity touches upon an important concept with which this aspect of community membership may be described, namely the concept of the 'stranger'. Each sounding board is unique, but it is also corporeal. Sartre (Jefferson 1989) saw the human body as the sole object of which we have both objective and subjective knowledge. We have subjective experience of our own body, such as pain, pleasure, and what it both literally and emotionally feels like to smile or screw up our eyebrows. The latter are important elements in sign language expression called, rather confusingly, 'non-manual features'. We have objective knowledge of 'bodies' (both our own and others') for example in a large body of medical literature, although it is certainly possible to disagree about the objectivity of this knowledge.

Since we necessarily experience from a viewpoint—our own—one's body is the measure of all things. For example, we can only 'feel' the pain of others by imagining how we would feel or have felt in the past. Our eyes form the body-image boundary, the boundary between the body that we are and the body we see out of. This is quite literally the case in the sense that whatever we see is framed by the corners of our eyes and is indeed on the whole outside our body. This body-image boundary is defined subjectively as the border between the familiar and the strange. The perception psychologist J.J. Gibson correctly notes that when a point of observation is occupied by a person, the optical information available to that person cannot be shared by other persons (see figure 2.3 overleaf).

> "For the body of the animal who is observing temporarily conceals some portion of the environment in a way that is unique to that animal. I call this information propriospecific as distinguished from exterospecific, meaning that it specifies the self as distinguished from the environment." (Gibson 1986:111)

The American anthropologist A. David Napier places great importance on this body-image boundary being the line separating the familiar from the strange, and argues that we metaphori-

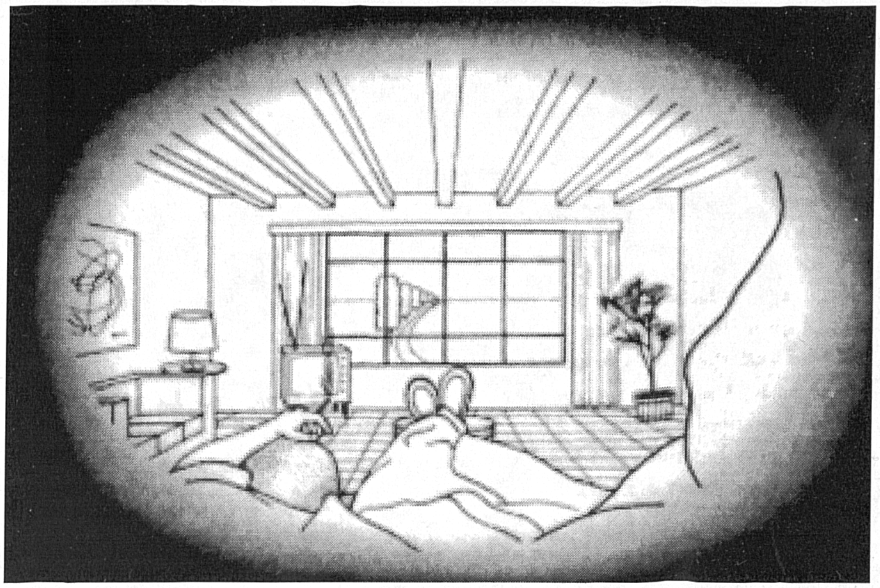

Figure 2.3
J.J. Gibson (1986:119): One image out of a series of three entitled *A sequence of overlapping fields of view obtained by turning the head to the right.*

cally associate that which is familiar in our culture with the knowledge we have of our body. In which case, he tells us:

> "...'body' and 'culture' are metaphorically identical—so much so, that an awareness of bodily pollution, and the awareness of mental illness in particular, is contingent upon what we take 'culture' to be [...] the body as culture—as a locus for what we are, and as a stage for identifying all the strangers that we insist we are not." (Napier 1992:142)

In this light Deaf people will define their culture partly by insisting upon what they are not. This same conclusion was arrived at independently in a participant observation study on deafness by Jennifer Harris (1995a:152). With reference to the above, for example, Deaf people do not regard hearing loss as an essential feature of experience, and they do not see themselves as disabled. Kyle and Woll found similar opinions in the Deaf community:

> "In questions about the nature of those who attend the deaf club there is general rejection of the view that they are somehow handicapped. Statements which imply acceptance of deaf community life ('are proud to be deaf' or 'are treated normally there') are readily agreed with..." (Kyle and Woll 1989:20)

Culture itself here enters the realm of the clinic:

> "Our notions of what a culture means socially are identical to our notions of what a culture is clinically." (Napier 1992:151)[3]

It follows that Deaf people will not see themselves (unsurprisingly) as 'strange' but as wholly normal, which is expressed in the remarks by Kyle and Woll above. Moreover, they will associate a particular level of linguistic ability—the extent to which a signer is competent in self-expression, including ease, personality and iconic resourcefulness—with cultural 'sameness'. This cultural association even stretches across boundaries of nations and peoples when Deaf people claim they feel closer to Deaf people from other countries than with hearing people from the same country.

In addition, shared social norms which are based on such subjective knowledge of one's body contribute to the formation of the Deaf community, including certain concepts of hearing loss and disability. In general, the norms describe all attitudes, behavioural patterns and policies which result in the treatment of Deaf people as belonging to a social group for clinical/pathological reasons, rather than the much more subjective reasons outlined above.

The description of the Deaf comunity provided here is an interpretation establishing a meaningful social space in which cultural phenomena in relation to visual perception can be studied while operating with concepts of 'community', 'culture' and 'disability' which are both acceptable within the Deaf community and accepted as cogently descriptive academically.

Finally, if the body can be said to be a stage for cultural impression and expression, and signing-acts are of necessity played out through and on the body, then it follows that visual experience and visual expression are central to the cultural identity of those Deaf people who use sign language as their preferred language. In chapter 3 these visual themes are explored in greater detail.

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1. In the words of Bill Stokoe (1987:267): "...deaf people themselves have more visibility now, more public acceptance, more self-awareness (as far as this can be seen by outsiders), more pride in Sign Language, and even more motivation to learn English as a second language. More and better positions are open to qualified deaf persons, and the opportunities for them to qualify in a great many more professions and vocations are opening up as well."
2. In this volume the capital 'D' has been used consistently: see footnote 1 in the preface (page xi).
3. In my view, Napier's use of the term 'clinic' here deviates from Foucault's in his *Birth of the Clinic* (1991). Foucault's clinic(al) seems to refer to (the practice of) an institution of social segregation founded upon medical science, whereas Napier's usage (and the use applied in this article) of the term seems to me to describe more widely a pathological judgement which carries institutional weight.

3

Visual themes in Deaf experience

> "...the taxonomic imagination in the West is strongly visualist in nature, constituting cultures as if they were theatres of memory, or spatialized arrays. [...] The effect of domination in such spatial/temporal deployments [...] is that they confer on the other a discrete identity, while also providing the knowing observer with a standpoint from which to see without being seen, to read without interruption." (Clifford 1986:12)

Chapters one and two have addressed, in quite general terms, elements of the character of scientific observation and oversights in addressing the social nature of visual perception. In chapter 1 it was described how two assumptions concerning the nature of observation in social investigation, and effects of these assumptions on research being conducted, have meant that social aspects of Deaf visual perception have not readily been available as a main investigative topic. Chapter 2 described how an awareness of the particular nature of perception can be used to criticise abstract diagrammatic representations of the Deaf community. It was argued that an early diagrammatic representation of the constitution of Deaf communities depicts a mental construct in an entirely abstract fashion and is therefore unable to stand independently of verbal explanation. In addition, the model stresses linguistic aspects of community membership whereas there is no inclusion of visual experiences which are often valued and explicitly mentioned by Deaf people themselves and which are closely tied but not reducible to language.

This chapter engages directly with such claims, and thus moves towards visual sociology, a sociology which concerns itself with matters of visual perception as social phenomena. Moving into a discussion of visual perception in the Deaf community, it is also time for me to swap narrative form. I move to the first person pronoun ('I') as a clear indication that what follows is being described from my own necessarily limited perspective, both in the sense of opinion and knowledge, as well as in the sense of the visual perspective and 'visuality' I bring to the discussions that follow as a hearing outsider on the peripheries of the Deaf community here in Britain. In this chapter I will attempt to clarify what I aim to achieve with an approach which is contemporary to the extent that it reflects a postmodern and subjective involvement with visual perception, as well as provide the background for the practical research which I report in the next four chapters.

The main reason for undertaking this study for me was a lack of attention in the sociological literature on deafness to the social contributions offered by the visual perception of Deaf people. Very often—surprisingly often—visual perception gets a mention in literature of deafness, but rarely are suggestions grounded, descriptions provided, interpretations made or conclusions drawn. For example, I will list here a number of remarks made in relation to the visual perception of Deaf people, published recently in an ethnographic participant observation study undertaken by Jennifer Harris:

- "Janet's father's reaction [to her being deaf] was one of disbelief—acceptance came much later. The period of disbelief was confounded by the fact that Janet appeared to be able to hear when her siblings shouted. (It is more likely that Janet became accutely visually aware at an early age.)" (Harris 1995a:31)
- "It seems obvious to Sandie that the teacher should have employed a visual means of communication [...] 'Visual preference' therefore encompasses much more than the pure expression of preference for sign language use. Since deaf people generally utilise the visual channel, it seems obvious to them that 'being visual' is a necessity rather than a preference." (ibid :61)
- "Within the whole sample, there appears to have been an effort on the part of the advisors [...] to encourage the interviewees into certain types of employment with a strong visual element.[...] the interviewees were channelled into work in which it is comparatively easy to explain the tasks using visual cues." (ibid :80)
- "In Mohammed's case [supermarket shelving], the visual element was easily supplied. Although this seems *an obvious point, it has much to tell* about the types of work that are typically thought suitable for deaf people" (ibid :81)
- "D/deaf people use a different language to the majority population. Not only this, their language exploits a different medium—vision. This fact sets Deaf peoples' experiences apart from those of the majority. [Although] part of the Deaf construction of Deafness surrounds the idea that Deaf people form a linguistic minority, there is however, one fundamental difference between Deaf people and all other minority groups and it is related to the visual medium of communication." (ibid :172)

Sometimes the relevance of visual perception appears to me to be rather overstated and unfounded. This seems to me to be the case in the quote which mentions Mohammed's job of shelving goods in a supermarket. Harris' discussion of a job's visual elements which advisors, to her mind, appear to seek on the belief that such vacancies are particularly suited to Deaf people, appears to be an example of what could be described as self-fulfilling theorising. To my mind there does not appear to be anything particularly visual in the nature of shelving goods, at least not more (or less) than in any other type of manual labour one could mention. Unless Harris had the employment advisors of the Deaf people concerned confirm that they perceive particular jobs to be suited to Deaf people on the grounds of the perceptual requirements of those jobs—which she did not—the data generated by Harris merely affirm an attribute of manual employment. Without such confirmation, it is for example equally (if not more) likely that advisors were seeking employment for Deaf people on the basis of a low requisite of verbal and writing skills—a more overtly discriminative approach barring Deaf people from more lucrative, higher status employment. It is nevertheless the case that Deaf people have traditionally (but currently less so) been associated with specific types of employment. For example, a frequently occurring occupation among Deaf people was type-setter, and occasionally residential schools would house a print room where related skills could be practised. There seems to be a bizarre contradiction between the earlier stated association of Deaf people with low literacy levels and employment as type-setter, but tentative explanations can be provided. Firstly, previous generations of Deaf people used far more fingerspelling, and might have been perceived to have superior spelling skills although their competence in English might not have been fully realised or appreciated. Secondly, type used to be set as mirror-inverted lead characters into mirror-inverted pages, and as research into the neurology of perception of Deaf people has shown (to be discussed later), Deaf people develop particular aptitude in manipulating imagery. Thirdly, a factor unrelated to language ability was that until the invention of cathode-ray tubes and digital type, print rooms were extremely noisy environments, and people who were deaf would have remained unaffected by continuously high levels of noise. Residential schools offered few career opportunities to Deaf youngsters, usually being limited to manual trades such as type-setting. Type-setting, however, was considered working-class employment, and for those Deaf people who chose such occupations it meant that they therefore became socialised into a working-class environment. This example shows that a complex set of factors was involved in the job opportunities traditionally available to Deaf people. A social study of Deaf peoples' career paths would require a much more contextualised approach than detailed analysis of interviews with Deaf people can provide by itself, although such an analysis offers valuable insights into personal experiences of Deaf peoples' careers.

Of course Harris is not the only sociologist to comment on Deaf people's attention to visual iconic aspects, but few scholars have quite matched her speculations on its social relevance. Carol Erting, for example, sees not language but a particular visual perception and a form of audiological dependency as structuring the lives of Deaf people. As she herself put it:

> "...two themes structure the lives of deaf people in fundamental ways: deafness is primarily a visual experience; deafness results in dependence on those who are not deaf." (Erting 1987:130)

Her assertion that deafness (by which she means an inability to hear) is at the source of such different visuality needs qualification, since it is clear that many hearing children of Deaf parents grow up themselves as Deaf members of the Deaf community, often working as highly skilled interpreters. Although such people are likely to become more involved than their parents could be with hearing people and their environment, they can very well share with their parents a more perceptual approach to the world around them. This suggestion will remain speculative until more detailed research is undertaken on visual aspects of Deaf experience than is being presented in this volume, although a study undertaken by Emmorey, Kosslyn and Bellugi (1993) into the neurological visual abilities of Deaf people would support my interpretation, since its positive findings included data from fluent hearing signers who were siblings of Deaf parents. This research will be discussed later. Nevertheless, Deaf people's perception of the world, according to Erting, is different because of a lack of hearing:

> "Deafness, especially if it is profound from birth, drastically alters a person's perception of the world. No auditory information is available for development of either basic concepts or auditory-vocal language. Not only is lack of hearing annoying and inconvenient, it results in a different organizational structure for the lives of deaf people when compared with their hearing-speaking counterparts." (Erting 1987:130–131)

Providing a specific but theoretical example of how such organisational structure might differ, Erting points to the need for access to information:

> "Because a deaf person requires as much information as a hearing person, a basic goal for deaf people is to acquire information and to communicate with others in the most effective way possible, both to avoid visual fatigue and to free their visual attention for the next activity or demand. This goal is not peripheral; rather, it is a central organising principle for their lives. Success in achieving it is necessary in a world in which effective information processing and management are keys to survival." (Erting 1987:131)

This comment links in directly with the conversation analysis research undertaken by Paul McIlvenny and Pirkko Raudaskoski (1994) mentioned in chapter 1, and provides a likely explanatory reason for the strategies employed by Deaf people mentioned in that study.

Equally pertinent observations on the visual perception of Deaf people have been made by a scholar coming from a different discipline, Oliver Sacks. His book *Seeing voices* does not mention the information on which his knowledge has been based, but throughout the work Sacks takes it for granted that the brains of Deaf people adapt to the needs of a visual/gestural language, as for example when he writes that:

> "The existence of a visual language, Sign, and of the striking enhancements of perception and visual intelligence that go with its acquisition, shows us that the brain is rich in potentials we would scarcely have guessed of." (Sacks 1991:xiii)

It is furthermore clear to him that there is a necessary link between our biological and our cultural make-up in the contributions each has to make to the kind of language we exploit, no matter whether we are Deaf or hearing people. What matters is the kind of contribution made, so that

> "In the case of Sign, the distinctiveness of the language, its 'character', is biological as well, for it is rooted in gesture, in iconicity, in a radical visuality, which sets it apart from any spoken tongue. Language arises—biologically—from below, from the irrepressible need of the human individual to think and communicate. But it is also generated, and transmitted—culturally—from above, a living and urgent embodiment of the history, the world-views, the images and passions of a people." (Sacks 1991:124–125)

In another speculation on the relevance of visual perception Jim Kyle and Bencie Woll hint at a theory on visual perception in relation to being Deaf, but do not expand on what such a theory might look like or how it might impact on social theories of deafness. While trying to describe the nature of the British Deaf community, Kyle and Woll focus mostly on issues of information and communication. Following a hard day's work with hearing colleagues Deaf people sit at home in front of a television which shows neither a captioned interpreter nor subtitling, in the company of family who are not able to communicate with them:

> "While deaf people are happy to work with hearing people, at home they may find those closest to them unable to communicate satisfactorily (with interaction lessened as a result), and they may be denied access to the visual medium of information which, at least theoretically, would be of most use in understanding the hearing world." (Kyle and Woll 1989:20)

While the experience described by Kyle and Woll may be an experience common to Deaf people, the slant of the description would be equally suited in support of a social oppression theory of deafness as it would to the structured cultural linguistic approach attempted here. Kyle and Woll's study forms a timely contribution to a description of the British Deaf community, but since their discussion is limited to information and communication related through spoken and signed language, the social nature of visual information and communication per se remains unexplored and unacknowledged, despite Kyle and Woll suggesting its theoretical relevance. Deaf people are not being denied access to the medium of television; they have no access to the element of sound it transmits, and through that to a language element which is of considerable importance to conveying information in television broadcasts to hearing people. Otherwise, to watch television without sound is no different for a Deaf person to being in an environment without sound, and few people will suggest that because Deaf people have no access to sound they are being denied access to their environment. What Kyle and Woll presumably meant is that the medium of television is uniquely suited to incorporate a visual language element, be it written language (subtitling) or signed (sign language interpreting), and failing to incorporate that visual language element means that Deaf people are being denied an important information element in the medium of television. In other words, in the above quotation there is an unintended but nevertheless misleading confusion between modes and codes of the information transmitted in the course of television broadcasts.

Language adaptation and cultural perception

As all of the above quotations testify, Deaf people's interpretation of their own experiences is not in line with the perception the majority of hearing people have of those experiences—except probably the last one. Kyle and Woll suggest that BSL, the language used for communication in the Deaf community, serves as a central example of this misalignment, since it frames experience in particular ways (as language does). Kyle and Woll thus arrive at the conclusion that

> "...deaf people through their language negotiate and agree on a construction of reality. This reality need not be identical with hearing people's views. We have frequently had the experience that deaf people questioned about such and such a happening will simply shake their head and say 'it's the deaf way'. They are very clear in the division between what deaf people accept and what a hearing person will understand." (Kyle and Woll 1989:9)

It is not easy to grasp how Deaf people amongst themselves would reach agreement on the content of a complex and multi-layered notion like a 'construction of reality' if it is mediated only by their language. But what this statement proposes is that, on the basis of shared language understanding, Deaf people may often see hearing people as ignorant outsiders. This is a wholly common feature among cultures with different spoken languages, and to that extent Deaf people are unremarkable: language is most often included in our definitions of culture. But what is suggested here is that Deaf people are clear that there is an area of experience from which hearing people are simply barred, that this area of experience is shared between Deaf people, and that according to Kyle and Woll this area of experience is based in language. It is certainly possible to find strong support for their claim, for example in the neurology of deafness mentioned earlier. First of all, in *Seeing voices*, Sacks explains to the reader that the use of sign language from an early age results in unique neurological adaptations of the brain. In a lecture at Durham University in January 1990 (Sacks 1990) Sacks stated that in sign language:

> "One can have a dozen, or a dozen-and-a-half, grammatical modifications, done simultaneously, one on top of the other, and when this came home to me, the neurologist in me was aroused. I thought: 'that's impossible. How the hell can the brain analyse eighteen simultaneous visual patterns?' I was filled with a sort of neurological awe. The answer to this, briefly, is that the normal brain can't make such a visual analysis, but it can learn to do so." (Sacks 1990:16.72. Author's transcript from video recording)

I think it is worth emphasising the point Oliver Sacks makes. What he is suggesting is essentially that a person's brain can learn to adapt its functioning to suit the visual nature of language elements—and Sacks' reference here is exclusively to language. A little later in his lecture there is a similar reference to the visual nature of the language, as Sacks notes that to him it is also clear that:

> "...rather large parts of the brain are involved in the processing of a visual language. All sorts of visual power become heightened, and sometimes to an extraordinary degree." (Sacks 1990:17.40. Author's transcript from video recording)

Similar thought underpins the more detailed analyses in Poizner, Klima and Bellugi (1990). A study mentioned earlier, that of Emmorey, Kosslyn and Bellugi, reports on preliminary research in the visual neurology of deafness which tested signers' ability to mentally project alphabetic characters shaped to fit a simple grid, to memorise nonsense patterns, and their ability to rotate asymmetrical shapes built up of connected squares. As the researchers point out, the study confirmed that:

> "...both deaf and hearing ASL signers have an enhanced ability to generate relatively complex images and to detect mirror image reversals. [...] Signers' enhanced visual abilities may be tied to specific linguistic requirements of ASL." (Emmorey, Kosslyn and Bellugi 1993:139)

The hearing signers mentioned were people with Deaf parents. This research confirms my suggestion that hearing siblings of Deaf parents can be 'Deaf' at least to the extent that they share with their parents particular abilities in relation to visual perception. Of course, the extent to which they are Deaf socially also depends on many other factors discussed in chapter 2. For all significant findings, Emmorey et al. speculate that the enhanced abilities relate to ASL (American Sign Language) requirements, a speculation which is reinforced by their frequent reference to Deaf people and their hearing siblings as 'signers'. For all significant findings the explicit claim is being made that the fact that findings were significant for both Deaf people and hearing siblings of Deaf people suggests a link to language requirement:

> "The finding that both deaf and HD signers form relatively complex images faster than nonsigners suggests that experience with ASL may affect image generation ability.[...] The fact that the HD signers performed like the deaf signers shows that the enhancement of image generation is not a consequence of auditory deprivation. Rather, it appears to be due to experience with a visual language." (Emmorey et al. 1993:158)

Within the context of the study such a suggestion is entirely reasonable and Emmorey et al. build further upon the suggestion by discussing language functions which could well exploit the kind of enhanced abilities they found in Deaf peoples' mental functions. But although I would agree that there probably are important links between language function and enhanced mental ability in relation to visual perception, it would nevertheless have been difficult to draw the conclusion that language could be the only source of the significant findings. To find, as Emmorey et al. do, that auditory deprivation is not the cause of difference between Deaf people (I include hearing siblings of Deaf people, 'HD signers', in my use of the term) and hearing people does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the cause is therefore use of visual language. As I am suggesting throughout this volume, the use of visual language is one aspect of Deaf peoples' more generally different visuality. Rather than supporting a notion that language dictates mental requirements, I would suggest that a more complex interplay between the perceptual system, mental faculties, language requirements and other perceptual strategies in relation to the social environment would provide a more satisfactory and comprehensive explanation for Deaf peoples' preferences for visual information. In so far as the suggestion by Emmorey et al.—namely that it appears to be the case that language requirements are affecting mental abilities—is to be seen in the context of a starting point which limits their enquiry to potential links in language functions, their conclusions are entirely grounded:

> "Visual-spatial perception, memory, and mental transformations are prerequisites to grammatical processing in ASL [...] Hence, it is of interest to examine the relation between the use of ASL and spatial imagery abilities." (Emmorey et al. 1993:140)

A final example of how Kyle and Woll's claim could find support stems from sign linguistics itself. British Sign Language offers narrative tools which exploit spatial arrangements in ways almost beyond the ability of the 'normal' brain to deal with. For example, one such tool is called 'role-shift'. In the recent British Sign Language/English Dictionary 'role-shift' is defined as

> "...a general term which relates to the signer taking on different roles within the discourse. This may be indicated by body shift and eye gaze: once the signer has indicated a shift of role, everything that is signed is produced as if it were from that person's perspective. Thus role shift allows

> the signer to make use of what is sometimes called 'direct address'. Typically, the signer also takes on key aspects of the other person's character, as portrayed in the discourse..." (Brennan 1992:132)

Note how the signer does not simply sign from various character's perspectives but incorporates typical behaviour, unique character, in that essentially embodied linguistic expression.

Role-shift requires an ability to perform complex mental manipulations of visual/spatial arrangements, since role-shift also involves an imaginary shift in visual and spatial vantage point. The virtual spatial location of the signer's narrative expression changes according to the spatial placement of each character included in that narrative. Role-shift in sign languages furthermore differs from similar functions in spoken languages because it is a pervasive element in the language rather than an occasional stylistic element in particular narrative forms (as appears to be the case in spoken languages). As Sacks rightly points out, only a brain which is especially adapted to be able to perform such mental functions in relation to visual constructs would be able to 'compute' role-shift functions. This ability to instantly and rigourously manipulate an entire virtual surrounding is also an applied example of the enhanced visual ability explored in the study by Emmorey et al.

Examples such as the ability to use role-shift present a problem in social research which aims to address aspects of the social nature of Deaf peoples' lives. Not only is it difficult to imagine the importance of such visual strategies to the lives of Deaf people, the very idea that visuality is particular and can be shared among Deaf people is a relatively new concept. It seems that within the context of social science there are relatively few tools available, both in terms of epistemology and in methodology, that allow for meaningful analysis of what such particular visuality means socially and culturally. This problem is even more pronounced in the case of hearing researchers, to whom that particular visuality is not always directly obvious or available, and for whom it is quite literally difficult to see the complex of relationships between visual abilities and social relations.

What the studies by Kyle and Woll, Sacks, Emmorey et al. and Brennan have in common is that the perceptual abilities of Deaf people are being discussed from the viewpoint of language requirement. This is an entirely legitimate exercise—and an obvious focus in so far as some of the quotations are from linguists—particularly in view of a history of sign language oppression and oral education of Deaf people. Sign language was of overriding concern to Deaf people themselves before it became a subject in science, and it should be noted that Deaf people have referred to their use of sign language as a 'natural' preference (Padden and Humphries 1988:chapter 4) long before sign languages became socially sanctioned means of communication. Once academic linguistic interest in sign language was raised, however, the research which resulted had a great effect on contemporary thought in relation to language and linguistics, and being Deaf in general. The attention to language function in the quotations is therefore well-founded. I am focusing on these quotes by well-known scholars to make the point that the impact of sign linguistics on discussions pertaining to the nature of visual perception of Deaf people has been such that 'discoveries' of phenomena pertaining to Deaf vision have yet to be framed in a dialectic outside that which addresses language itself. Without such an alternative framework, a predominantly linguistic understanding of Deaf people's visual perception becomes preeminent, reinforced by a decidedly linguistic focus in research hypotheses and methodologies in studies in the neurology, psychology and sociology of Deaf people's visual perception. Such research serves worthy causes and contributes greatly to our understanding of being Deaf; the argument I present is not about quality or relevance but about limitation. The paucity of alternative approaches is, I feel, indicative of a much wider prejudicial treatment of one particular paradigm of knowledge, namely that generated through language. Descartes argued that language (the innate tool of understanding) is necessary to make sense of percepts, because:

> "...without the intervention of our understanding, neither our imagination nor our senses could ever assure us of anything..." (Descartes quoted in Jay 1993:73)

It seems that wherever the interface of language and perception becomes the topic of discussion, there is interference from a scopic regime based on contemporary Cartesian philosophy, in which great value is placed on language as a source of knowledge at the expense of the visual itself—that is, at the expense of our senses. In any culture prejudicial treatment is given to particular ways of thinking and knowing while alienating other techniques (Napier 1992:xxiv–xxvi). The element of prejudice is a form of ocularcentrism, a term used for the ways in which we value and treat visual practices in our societies, both historically and cross-culturally (Jay 1993:3). The themes of the scopic and the ocular have been explored in sociology mainly in so far as these practices have served as a basis of theories of surveillance and spectacle (see for example Chaney 1993, Crary 1992 and the work of Foucault, but notably Foucault 1991). Ocularcentrism appears here as an innocuous or less threatening form, more as a kind of social and academic preference. The contribution of sign linguistics is both timely, and positive towards Deaf people and sign language. In so far as it helped greatly to raise issues in relation to visual perception, the tone set by this form of ocularcentrism is celebratory. Nevertheless, it is prejudicial to the extent that the success of sign linguistics has resulted in an unnecessarily narrow type of discussion of the visual perception of Deaf people and its role in generating and commmunicating knowledge. What follows therefore is a focussed discussion of that interface between language and visual perception.

Visual perception and knowledge

It is not customary more generally to associate knowledge with language only. The question 'How is it that people come to have knowledge of the external world?' can be answered in a most pragmatic way without involving arguments in relation to language by reference to the natural sciences, as, for example in opthalmology:

> "In each eye, over 120 million rods take in information on some five-hundred levels of lightness and darkness, while more than seven million cones allow us to distinguish among more than one million combinations of colour. The eye is also able to accomplish its tasks at a far greater remove than any other sense, hearing and smell being only a distant second and third." (Jay 1993:6)

Or, taking perception one step further, in psychology:

> "Perceiving is a psychosomatic act, not of the mind or of the body but of a living observer." (Gibson 1986:240)

right through to philosophical musings about an observer's interaction with the environment:

> "Things must be substantial before they can be significant or symbolic. A man must find a place to sit before he can sit down to think." (Gibson 1950:199)

As Gibson (1986:63) has argued, the definition of information as the stuff that is available for perception differs radically from information, defined as the stuff of communication, in the cultural sciences. Perceptually we live, as it were, in a continuous pool of potential information, and all we have to do to access it is what most of us cannot help but doing: look. Culturally, Deaf people are observers who pick information from the ambient optic array which is pertinent—which affects them through cultural interpretation—partly because the optic array is the medium for the transmission of their language, and partly because the optic array must contain information about the 'Deaf way' which is mentioned in the quote by Kyle and Woll.

The Deaf way signifies a system of meaning sharing, a method of making sense of the world. It is significant, in the quotation by Kyle and Woll earlier, that what Deaf people refer to as the Deaf way, Kyle and Woll interpret as a construction of reality mediated by language, because language clearly is such a system. However, if it were only 'language', the Deaf way would be available to someone fluent in that language. But Deaf people, Kyle and Woll report, state categorically that hearing people cannot understand the Deaf way. If that is so, there must be an element in the language (but not particular to it) which is shared by Deaf people and not accessible to hearing people. The element which best suits these requirements is the perceptual ability of Deaf people. It fulfils all the criteria beautifully: it is accessible to Deaf people, but not to hearing people, it is exploited greatly in British Sign Language, and as I will argue next, although clearly exploited by that language, it is external to it, and therefore it should equally surface in social relations between Deaf people outside the language sphere.

From apperception to encultured vision

Helmholtz

Cartesian dualism, which strictly separates the bodily function of simply looking from that of visual awareness mediated by the higher level functions of the soul (such as language) became, as indicated, the ideal vehicle for a particular interpretation of the process of science. An inviolate world was observed through the lens which is our eye ('I'). Following strict rules of engagement, the so-called canons of good science, the intellect would subject these observations to hypotheses and analyses on the basis of the laws of nature. In order to make such engagement possible, the soul (deemed the centre of human consciousness in Enlightenment) came readily supplied with innate ideas about all that was inviolate about the world. Since the act of perception was located in the effects of light (lumen) on an optical construct, vision was located outside the 'I'.

It was not until Helmholtz that the act of perception became associated with personal experience. Jonathan Crary speculates that this may be so because of an overriding 19th Century concern with physics, and notably with the technical accomplishments in industry, such as steam engines, the pinnacle of industrial achievement. Through the discourse of physics and liberal use of metaphor, commentators made statements which served both to naturalise machinery and help to explain functions of the human body. Thus,

> "Helmholtz's work on human vision, including binocular disparity, stemmed from his original interest in animal heat and respiration and his overriding ambition to describe the functioning of a living being in precise physiochemical terms." (Crary 1992:148)

Dialectically this actually does not differ much from René Descartes' own approach. He was more comfortable with the workings of the camera obscura, a widely known and admired instrument in 17th century Holland, than he was knowledgable about the operation of the eye. In his discussions there is a constant exploitation of analogy between camera obscura and the eye in his *Optics*. However, Helmholtz takes in his approach an experiential rather than nativist viewpoint. He distinguished between three kinds of percepts, namely percepts entering the eye, percepts which were linked to ideas, and these ideas themselves.

In associating embodied experience with the act of perception, Helmholtz seems to have opened the door for individual difference and social constructions of vision, since percepts are closely related to the knowledge we have of objects. After describing how the perception of a person who is lying down in a slowly darkening room gradually shifts from being based on perceptual images seen through the eye (*Anschauungsbilder*) to memory-images (*Vorstellungsbilder*), he concludes that

> "...the elements in the sense-perception that are derived from experience are just as powerful as those that are derived from present sensations..." (Helmholtz 1968a:181)

Although Helmholtz describes perception in terms of experience, which involves a conceptual move away from Descartes' disembodied optics, he is unable to resolve the problem of Cartesian dualism, the gap between the body (apperceptions) and the mind (knowledge). Helmholtz still had to agree that ideas had to be present in the brain, although experience operated to some extent autonomously in relation to apperception. Ideas were a form of consciousness based on the same mode as mental imagery (Helmholtz 1968a:188). Although experience interacted continuously with direct perception, experience itself was still measured and organised around consciousness, as experience itself was fallible, subject to habit and often based on mere impressions. Helmholtz trusted that visual experience would be more reliable in the case of 'visual experts', on whose observations research into perception should be based to uncover the natural laws of perception. This notion of an accurate perception as an activity subject to natural laws and free of subjective interpretations and (inter)personal misperceptions, barred the door to the influence of the emergent science of psychology which held no promise in Helmholtz' perception other than for explaining visual impressions which were unlike 'normal' ones (Helmholtz 1968b:220).

Arnheim

Visual impressions which were, in Helmholtz's framework, abnormal were not exhaustively explored until well into the 20th Century. The newly developing science of psychology focused not on the normal but on the deviant, and it was quickly established that sensory deprivation damages an individual's ability to communicate with an environment. But more surprising was the finding that thought itself became quickly disturbed in situations of sensory deprivation, showing that the activity of the senses are a necessary condition for the functioning of the mind:

> "When the visual, auditory, tactile and kinæsthetic senses are reduced to unpatterned stimulation—nothing but diffuse light for the eyes and a steady buzz for the ears—the entire mental function of the person is upset. Social adjustment, serenity, and capacity for thought are profoundly impaired. During the monotonous hours of the experiment, the subject, finding himself unable to think, replaces the outer stimulation of the senses by reminiscing and by conjuring up imagery, which soon becomes incontrolable, independent from the outside. This imagery can develop into genuine hallucination..." (Arnheim 1970:18–19)

There is probably more than an incidental relationship between this observation and the fact that Deaf people in the past were often referred to as the deaf and dumb, the suggestion often being that they had no capacity for either speech or thought (cf. Jackson 1990).

Based on such evidence, Arnheim concludes not only that perception is required for thought, but that truly productive cognitive thinking indeed takes place in the realm of imagery (Arnheim 1970:v). Firmly rejecting the Cartesian contention that ideas are innate, Arnheim instead proposes that the only requirement is that objects become associated with experience, probably much like object naming in language acquisition. In this build-up of visual knowledge the nature of objects in the visual field is detected and assigned a place in the system which constitutes our total view of the world (ibid:90). This way every act of perception subsumes a given phenomenon under some visual concept, and Arnheim sees this operation as constituting a thought process in which language has no place. Moreover, Arnheim finds support in his theory in the form of gestures. Although he never refers to sign languages as such, Arnheim does describe how in gestures:

> "...the perceptual qualities of shape and motion are present in the very acts of thinking depicted by the gestures and are in fact the medium in which the thinking itself takes place." (ibid:118)

That such a theory of perception is thoroughly embodied is clear when Arnheim uses a metaphor which describes perceptual and pictorial shapes as the flesh and blood of thinking itself (ibid:134). In Arnheim's theory of thought processes it becomes untenable to suggest that there would be much cognitive difference between percepts of particular items and mental imagery: although the mental image of a table may be more or less precise than a percept of a table, they are both equally concrete. Arnheim's main problem was how thought could be based on the general rather than on the invariably particular nature of percepts. In order to be able to do that, Arnheim develops a Gestalt theory, in which the "awe-inspiring feat" of cognition becomes apparent. According to Arnheim, a spectator moves between different levels of perceiving what he terms the constancy of objects (ibid:43). In order to be able to handle an object (say, drink out of a glass) an observer classes it in its highest level of generality, where it becomes a generic object with general, shared features with all other glasses: it becomes a transparent container of liquids with a predictable weight and material strength. By comparison, the paintor painting the glass descends to a much deeper level of discreteness, actively focusing on what is particular to the glass, which has a particular form and colour shaped by the light sources available there and then. According to Arnheim we are perceptually able to access levels of generality at will. This ability to move along levels of perceptual abstraction is a necessary condition in the constitution of thought, and a requirement for visual intelligibility of objects themselves, since objects are subject to distortions, such as distortions caused by speed, occulation (partial blocking of an object by another), et cetera. By working between such levels of generality in perception the brain is able to create an appearance of constancy of objects by abstracting them into a complex of generic features, each of them potentially subject to distortion. The ability to 'abstract' is therefore not language specific because abstraction is a strategy of the senses which has become available to language.

The combination of a visual perception operating through levels of generality, and the observation that there is no dichotomy between abstract and concrete things—since even mental content has to exist on a particular generative level—would seem to inform the continuing linguistic debate on whether sign languages and spoken languages are equally able to express 'abstract' concepts. Arnheim's description of perception has since been termed the Gestaltist approach (Hagen 1980:4).

J.J. Gibson

J.J. Gibson's work in visual psychology started early in World-War Two, with a study about fatal errors in judgement made by young and inexperienced US airforce pilots, in particular during practice landings. As Gibson points out, lack of visual experience played a central role in many crashes. Many youngsters had never flown before being enrolled in the airforce. They had never seen the sheer speed with which they approached the earth in an aeroplane before, nor the 'bird's eye' perspective they got in the approach. J.J. Gibson's first task, therefore, was to list the kinds of perspective strategies exploited by perception during the course of a landing (Gibson 1950). What is immediately clear in my anecdotal representation of Gibson's discussion is that people develop a particular visuality which is influenced by culture. In this case an element of mid-twentieth century 'American' visuality is being addressed, the visual ability involved in flying an aeroplane, marked occasionally by a lack of visual ability necessary to return successfully and intact. Visuality is here being discussed in terms of normative characteristics of viewpoint, being not higher up than a tall building, and suffering no faster speed of displacement than that of a contemporary automobile. In other words, ordinary visual experience did not include the height and travelling speed of aeroplanes. Arnheim pointed out that objects are subject to speed distortion. What becomes immediately apparent in the story told by Gibson is that, like all experience, we have to experience such extreme distortion as involved in flying before we can re-assert control over our percepts, that is, we have to be able to normalise our perception in the light of changed circumstance. It is within such a wider context, which includes visual phenomena as linguistic functions, that I suggest the adaptation of neurological function to vision in Deaf people takes place. We sense before we language (turning the noun into a verb is an intentional suggestion). This element of precedence is also implied in the quotation presented earlier, Gibson's statement that things must be substantial before they can be significant or symbolic.

It is worth emphasising this point with another example. Gibsonian theory of perception depicts perceptual ability as generated by a system which not only includes eyes and a brain, but extends further to include the body, the head, eye-lids, and all the 'cabling' such as nerves and nerve cells (Gibson 1986:218). Perception is further conceived of paradigmatically as a scroll (although not so much in the sense of a projection of it) which commences at birth and which is absolutely continuous until death. Such perception is not so much focused on objects as it is on a complete environment, a pool of information which Gibson calls the visual field, the constant perception of a substantial and spatial world (Gibson 1950:8–27). Depth perception is replaced by continuous disturbances of structure, which is much like Arnheim's description of distortion. Meaning information is construed through affordances, by which Gibson means the perception of value-rich ecological objects, and these affordances are learned in socially determined categories. Gibson here seems to follow an evolutionary epistemology of meaningful experiences and actions in which we learn that particular percepts have particular implications: the percept of a brown shape very quickly getting bigger, sharper, more structured, hairier, smellier and more defined means that it will shortly be time to run or to wake up, because the percept is a bear or a lion or whatever. Language in such events is in the way because by the time we have finally named all that is meaningful in our visual field alone we are dinner. Language is necessary to later rationalise the event for ourselves in the light of all earlier ones, and necessary to be able to communicate the story to others later in the comfort of the hotel bar. A similar observation was made by Gregory, who arrived at it by considering what would happen in an event like the one sketched above in computational terms and he notes that the computer would run out of time if it were asked to list and label all the ingredients of the event before returning a solution; perceptual and conceptual intelligence, he informs us, have to be separate because perceptual intelligence has to be fast (Gregory 1991:330), a statement which is itself a partial return to Cartesian dualism.

To think of visual percepts as being necessarily meaningful without being immediately invested with language might help to explain the peculiar cognitive prowess of two people encountered by Oliver Sacks. In his book *The man who mistook his wife for a hat*, Sacks describes the ability of two people he met, twins, to recount every single event in their lives from year 4 onwards. After noting that the twins had previously been diagnosed as autistic, psychotic and severely retarded, a somewhat mystified Sacks writes that to his mind 'the reality' was:

> "...far stranger, far more complex, far less explicable, than any of these studies suggest..." (Sacks 1986:185–186).

In his own assessment Sacks comes uncannily close to applying Gibson's theory of perception, but in Sacks it is never more than use of metaphor. He does not suggest anywhere that visual perception itself might offer insights into their ability. After describing the twins' memories as documentaries (having carefully placed the word in inverted commas, ibid:185), Sacks notes that:

> "...there is available to the twins a prodigious panorama, a sort of landscape or physiognomy, of all they have heard, or seen, or thought, or done, and that in the blink of an eye, externally obvious as a brief rolling and fixation of the eyes, they are able (with the 'mind's eye') to retrieve and 'see' nearly everything that lies in this vast landscape." (Sacks 1986:189)

I think that what Sacks' approach bears witness to is his own overarching, covert belief that language connects memory and experience to awareness and consciousness; this finds support when Sacks looks around for clarification on the abilities of the twins. He limits his discussion of visual perception to the contributions made by Helmholtz, and therefore Sacks' assessment does not include the more recent claims that visual percepts are knowledge itself. After they had vainly tried to explain to Dr. Sacks how they managed to 'count' matches fallen out of a matchbox almost in the very instant they hit the floor, Sacks felt that the twins probably thought he was blind (ibid:190).

The twins' attempts to explain their ability to Dr. Sacks in gestures conveyed "an extraordinary sense of immediate, felt reality" (ibid:190). What the twins expressed was Oliver Sacks' inability to perceive things from their viewpoint, which would involve some sort of cognitive role-shift grounded in visual perception. This would require imagination as well as cognitive skill, but first of all it would require a theoretical paradigmatic shift to a much broader conceptualisation of knowledge than that which is implied by Sacks' assessment.

Despite this criticism of Sacks' approach, it is clear that language does play a role in visual perception, and this recognition raises a problem with J.J. Gibson's theory of visual perception. The main problem associated with Gibson's theory is that it does not deal with event sequences which are social in nature, taking place between people; as a consequence the perceptual strategies involved in social interaction remain unexplored. Gibson's theory is one of a single body in a hostile ecology. As Bruce and Green suggest:

> "...certain event sequences imply causal relationships between the participants, and the language we use to describe such events reflects, but may also influence, [...] perceptual learning." (Bruce and Green 1986:299)

Most visual activity by people takes place in a cultural environment, and we perceive our worlds according to a particular scopic regime which we share culturally. As Bruce and Green note, uncovering the social processes involved in visual perception requires a pragmatic approach which explores "real behaviour in real situations" (ibid:334).

From encultured vision to description

An example of what is involved in encultured vision is easily provided: without looking around, describe the room you are in with as much detail as possible. Then compare this description to what you *find* by *looking around. If Friedman and Liebelt* (1981:140) are correct, you should be able to fill in a lot of detail missing in the first description. Not only do we commonly 'delete' the most mundane and expected features from our consciousness, we memorise familiar surroundings as what Friedman and Liebelt call global frames, in which unimportant and mundane detail is erased, but which will automatically pop such detail back in when it becomes relevant. Friedman and Liebelt argue that this cognitive perceptual strategy frees up our vision for the unexpected. This way our memory representation of a specific event contains such global frames and what we could call a sort of top-up layer, an inventory of all that was different from that which was expected (ibid:139). How such a strategy might be accomplished by the brain is clearly a matter of current dispute, although it might be interesting to refer back to Helmholtz, who seemed to predict the recent notion of neural network activity able to organise such selective visual awareness, when he speculated that:

> "While traces which are similar, deposited in our memory by oft-repeated perceptions, strengthen one another, it is plain that perceptual rules which were regularly repeated in a similar fashion are obliterated during random change." (Helmholtz 1968b:220)

A similar process has been described recently by Barlow who, working on the basis of Gestalt psychology, speculates that the brain does not map an image topographically but rather stores images on the basis of particular gestalts which are being channeled to specific specialised areas in the visual cortex in processes he calls pattern selection and selective addressing (Barlow 1991:21).

Such use of terminology seems itself part of a new trend towards an interpretation of phenomena in terms of computers and forms of engineering (e.g. Gombrich 1991:29). The seeing persons in this new paradigm become actors who have motor skills that can analyse action chunks. In its most extreme expression the perception of a walking person is framed in terms of resolving the translation and rotation patterns carried out by component articulators which are the parts of the body (Perrett et al. 1991:107). The meaning I can infer from such an awkward use of vocabulary nevertheless seems to confirm that language is not necessary to comprehend actions:

> "It is a remarkable omission that [...] goal-centred descriptions have been generally absent from computational and psychological models of vision. This is perhaps so because psychologists have generally treated the understanding of actions as something beyond the realm of vision and more in the sphere of linguistics or semantics. [...] This attitude ignores the fact that the database and processing from which a comprehension of actions can be made, can be purely visual and does not necessitate the use of language." (Perret et al. 1991:107)

Visual perception is currently being seen not only as independent of language, but also as accumulative. Often the social aspect of vision is being underplayed, or not recognised in popular perception. In so many words, people tend to assume that what they see and how they interpret what they see is precisely what other people see and how other people interpret what they see. Segall et al. (1966) recognise this common assumption that visuality has a universal quality as an element of phenomenal absolutism. According to those researchers, taking the universal nature of visual perception for granted can lead to social strain:

> "Socially, one important aspect of phenomenal absolutism is the observer's assumption that all other observers perceive the same as he does, and that if they respond differently it is because of some perverse willfulness rather than because they act on different perceptual content." (Segall et al. 1966:5)

In so far as this element of phenomenal absolutism reflects an inability to consider alternative viewpoints and perceptions, it is indicative of the necessary rift between self and other, indicative of the body-image boundary, described in chapter 2. Since we only ever have available our own perception of an event, we will never appreciate how another person's visual perception of that same event might differ from our own percepts and perceptions. Segall et al. performed analysis on cross-cultural perception of particular image-events, and arrived at the conclusion that the differences found could be related to the environment in which people lived rather than to race, concluding that although the basic process of perception is the same for all of us, the content of perceptions differs on the basis of differential inference habits, attributable at least in part to our surroundings (ibid:187).

Alpers: an example

A particularly clear example of how a cultural environment might operate in relation to visual perception, and notably through its expression in pictorial language, is provided in Svetlana Alpers' discussion of Dutch Renaissance painting (1983). In her impressive tale of visual discovery, the art historian embarks on a radical, new interpretation of the foundations of Dutch Renaissance painting. This book is especially valuable since seventeenth century Holland according to Alpers was a visual culture (Alpers 1983:xxv), to the extent that visual experience was a central element in self-consciousness. This example has therefore not been chosen haphazardly (in the sense that any art movement will underscore a particular visuality) but has been selected because of Alpers' research approach: Alpers makes a significant contribution to a theory of the visual dispositions of seventeenth century Dutch society by carefully analysing not only the pictorial statements of the era, but also the social and epistemological requirements that made these statements possible.

That the Netherlands at the time was a visual culture finds more than incidental support in the fact that both Johannes Kepler (who first defined the *modus operandi* of the eye) and René Descartes both lived in the Netherlands during that period. Indeed Alpers notes that most well-known contributors to the study of optics, apart from Gallileo, could be found in the Netherlands. As Alpers tells us, northern Europe was the centre for the use of the lens and it was where the telescope was invented by Anthonie van Leeuwenhoek (ibid:25). Alpers suggests that there was a two-way street between art and knowledge of natural sciences, suggesting a strong cultural receptivity for both practices. For example, the uses of the camera obscura in the Netherlands was based on a particularly trusting set of assumptions regarding the quality and veracity of its capacity for representation, unlike the sentiments of Italian Renaissance artists and scholars:

> "Historians of science tell us that though the lens was long known, it had been considered distorting and deceptive. It was not until the seventeenth century that it was trusted. Indeed, empirical observation in Holland is made possible by a trust in a host of representations of the world. It is less the nature or use made of the camera obscura image than the trust placed in it that is of interest to us in understanding Dutch painting." (Alpers 1983:33)

This resulted in paintings which were consciously, or rather unashamedly, descriptive. They were not intended as *istoria*, as symbolic narratives, but as visual-pictorial descriptions, as the result of a highly conscious act of observation on the part of the painter:

> "That border line between nature and artifice that Kepler defined mathematically, the Dutch made a matter of paint [...] we have to consider if, more often than scholars have been willing to admit, deception here engages not a moral but an epistemological view: the recognition that there is no escape from representation." (ibid:35)

In an act of unconscious rebellion against contemporary approaches which predated postmodern thought by at least three hundred years, artists in the Netherlands pictured that what is perceived, that which is seen by the eyes, rather than symbolic representations of memorable events.

Descartes apparently reflected a general cultural state in philosophising on the dualistic character of perception in relation to consciousness. The intention behind the Dutch art of describing was to present paintings as a perceptual metaphor for knowledge; the Netherlands formed "a culture that assumes that we know what we know through the mind's mirroring of nature" (Alpers 1983:46).

In fact, Alpers suggests that the painters took the lead over natural science. She suggests that the tools Kepler used for his optical studies were based on the products developed for the artist's studio, and these tools were often made by painters themselves (ibid:71). It seems then that Cartesian perspective and dualism owe much to a Dutch seventeenth century fascination with perception and representation.

But there is also evidence on how such a preoccupation with representation spilled over into representations which exploit gestures. Joaneath Spicer discussed the meaning of 'elbows akimbo' in the context of Dutch seventeenth century painting. According to Spicer, the first mention of this gesture is in John Bulwer's *Chironomia* of 1644, well known in Deaf studies for his attention to Deaf people, their use of sign language, the potential of fingerspelling and his attempt to start a sign language academy (Dekesel, 1993). Spicer quotes him as writing:

> "…to set the arms agambo *or sprank, and to rest the turned-in back of the hand upon the side is* an action of pride and ostentation, unbeseeming the hand of an orator…" (Bulwer quoted in Spicer 1993:95)

Spicer notes that this posture was relatively common in Dutch painting, especially in paintings of army militias. The depiction of people portrayed with elbows akimbo is an important element in Rembrandt's famous painting *de Nachtwacht* (the Nightwatch). Spicer makes a direct connection between such imagery and the defiance of the Dutch militias, portrayed for posterity in the face of Spanish military threat. But Spicer interprets the depiction in terms of the kind of symbolic narrative (ibid:104) which Alpers argued was much more typical of Italian Renaissance—which would suggest that painters changed their outlook, their descriptive approach in this particular genre. It would seem however that there is no reason for Dutch artists to change tack in their descriptive approaches. An explanation which is equally likely in the case of these genre paintings is that the painters accepted commissions such as the ones described by Spicer on the same principles of descriptive representation as those of other genres studied in fine detail by Alpers. Militia paintings were not symbolic narratives but descriptions reflecting a cultural attitude. The people depicted are not acting, they are posing. And they are not merely posing, they are, quite literally com-posing, providing a spectacle based on an agreed visuality, taking a conventionalised 'stance' in relation to the viewer. Although the gesture of elbows akimbo may have been considered pugnacious, the paintings were not meant to be seen by the Spanish; they were meant to be seen by other contemporary Dutch people in order to boost national faith in defiance and inspire confidence in the face of great military threat. Elements typical of the approach suggested by Alpers feature equally in this genre: witness the little girl right in the middle of de Nachtwacht. She sends the whole depiction crashing down into the ordinary and mundane by her presence, turning the group more into a jostling party joking with the painter than an *istoria*-painting, with its reference to high drama and classical heroism, would allow for. The canvas almost becomes a 'snapshot', an occasional composition more reminiscent of a casual photograph than a carefully constructed narrative, and I find the painting closer to some news photographs of cheerful football crowds going to see a Saturday game than to the aggressive, self-aware and self-contained posed photograph of the pop-group *Sha Na Na* that Spicer compares it to (ibid:104). In agreement with Alpers, I find that this painting focuses on representation more than narrative, on the painting as depicting social reality more than as suggesting an æstheticised visual discourse on military grandeur. This discussion illustrates how two very different interpretations and two very different connections can be made on the basis of different epistemological approaches to the same pictorial statement. This is not to say that the discussions are arbitrary, that both discussions are equal to each other; and neither do I intend to suggest that our different discussions uncover the picture as an entirely ambiguous statement. The pictorial statement of the picture remains available in terms of its iconicity, as it were between those varying discursive readings, as unambiguous as the symbolic statements of the words written here—it is their interpretation that matters, and as with written words, there are multiple readings possible and likely.

Pictorial expression and iconicity in BSL

Alpers, showing the conventional nature of visual disposition in 'descriptive' paintings, and Spicer, indicating that a gesture like elbows akimbo was a pictorial statement laden with social meaning in seventeenth century Europe, both provide excellent examples of the kinds of visual knowledge, and information about a culture's visuality, that might be expressed by members of that culture and meaningfully interpreted as visual social phenomena in current, contemporary social theory. I have now nearly 'set the scene' for the photography projects that will follow in chapters five and six, but it would be irresponsible at this point not to address one more side to the interface between visual perception and an element of the nature of BSL. I have argued for a form of perceptual knowledge, knowledge that does not necessarily require language interpretation, and part of that argument has been that this perceptual knowledge is to some extent guided by social factors and expressed conventionally. BSL is a visual/gestural language mainly used by Deaf people, but the Deaf people who use BSL live in a western society which has itself a wide variety of pictorial conventions. My argument will be that some linguistic elements in BSL—the example provided is the expression of movement—can be meaningfully related to pictorial representation of movement in vernacular forms such as photography, cinematography and. cartoons. The point of this discussion is twofold. The first is to discuss an element of BSL expression in terms which are not couched in conventional linguistic vocabulary, but in terms related to a discussion of conventional visual expression. The second point I want to make is on the relationship between BSL and western pictorial representation. Within western culture there is an identifiable number of ways in which movement is pictorially presented, either literally or symbolically, through indexicality, or through metaphor. As I will show, some of these ways are equally or similarly being exploited in BSL. Occasionally (as in the example of movement depiction through abstraction) it appears to me that BSL allows for creative 'borrowing' of pictorial movement depiction used, in this case, in cartoons. In other examples, the suggestion is more that there are parallel strategies. Whichever the case may be, I hope to provide convincing argument that there is an interrelationship between wider pictorial expression, visual perception, being Deaf, and BSL.

Pictorial representation of movement and BSL

British Sign Language has been dependent on the social development of Deaf people themselves as well as on the social development of people in Britian, and just so it has been dependent on a particular kind of visual perception and visuality which is shared by all Deaf people as well as on elements in the visuality and means of pictorial representation and expression in western culture. BSL is an expressive language which has developed within a web of social relations, and together with other tools such as notation and forms of pictorial representation, it allows Deaf people to communicate and develop further both socially and culturally. But beyond BSL there is the mode of thought to which it appeals, and that mode of thought has different characteristics to that addressed by spoken languages:

> "...different modes of thought will, necessarily, treat signs and symbols in ways that are methodologically different, and [...] it is important for us to be aware of how frequently, even in the modern world, we rely on an inherently animalistic vocabulary—when, for example, we say that

> language has a life of its own, or when we discuss the psychological 'reality' of the phoneme..." (Napier 1992:52)

Throughout this discussion therefore it is important to be aware of the difference that exists between pictorial representation in western culture, and the iconic expressions of BSL users: although what I refer to are parallels or resemblances in forms of expression, the suggestion is not that BSL as a language is remotely like what could be seen to be a 'language' of pictorial conventions.

Indicators of movement

I have already given two important examples of how British Sign Language exploits perceptual abilities. I provided the example of role-shift, in which a signer manipulates a spatial environment through taking different 'viewpoints', the various viewpoints of those partaking in the conversation that is being re-signed and which also involves taking on notable (that is, spectacular) characteristics of those persons. And I provided the example of conversation attention strategies, in which signers employ information expressed by different participants in the conversation in order to be able to follow the conversation although they are not always able to follow the turn-taking of signers in time to pick up all that is actually being signed. But there are many more examples, often more straightforward than the examples used so far, and I will go into some more examples here in some depth to get across the powerful, and sometimes quite obvious, ways in which BSL exploits a particular way of, literally, seeing the world.

For me the most spectacular examples are in the multifold possible expressions of movement. Friedman and Stevenson have undertaken research into the pictorial representation of movement across cultures, and found that although there appears to be a limited set of depiction conventions and strategies, the frequency of exploitation of this relatively fixed set varies from culture to culture (Friedman and Stevenson 1980:226). Their 'set' is based on their understanding of Gibson's ecological perception, but it seems to me to also contain Gestaltist ideas of distortion. The set of conventions is set out as comprising four kinds of movement indication, namely depiction of movement 'arrested' from a single vantage point, the depiction of movement as multiple viewpoints, the depiction of movement through 'borrowing' information across scenes, and depiction of movement as abstractions (e.g. the ubiquitous 'speedlines' in cartoons). There is another one, a fifth, and Friedman and Stevenson call this the depiction of movement through metaphor; as an example they point to the odd distortions in photographs as a result of slow shutter speeds. This phenomenon must be well-known to the many Deaf people who use video, because video regularly shows the phenomenon when the tape is 'paused' or played in slow-motion. At the normal speed of 24 frames per second, we have the impression that movement is crisp and detailed. But in order to fully 'arrest' movement in a still image a shutter-speed of at least 1/125s is needed, whereas the speed of PAL video is no greater than 1/24s. Therefore, playing back video frame by frame discloses very few perfect stills. Most stills show the kind of blurring and distortion Friedman and Stevenson refer to.

Nevertheless, this kind of speed indicator has become most closely associated with photography, and in the early years was an unavoidable ingredient of any photograph which involved a speeding object, because shutter times were necessarily slow. A most beautiful example of a slow shutterspeed photograph is one taken by the famous photographer Jacques-Henri Lartigue, and features on the cover of an issue of the French Photo Poche series which is dedicated to his work (Delpire1983). It shows a 1912 racing automobile which was rapidly moving from left to right when the photograph was taken. Its bonnet is already out of the frame, and all that remains visible are the rear two wheels and the two people inside, one of whom is clearly with effort grasping a very large steering wheel. Behind the car there are three or four people visible on the other side of the road, and the trunks of two trees, or maybe telegraph poles. The oddest thing about the photograph, however, are its distortions. The rear wheels are not only, as one might expect, perspectivally distorted into ovals; they are ovals leaning distinctly forward in a manner which we simply never see wheels do. Yet, the people and the trees behind the car, are all leaning, very distinctly, in the opposite direction.

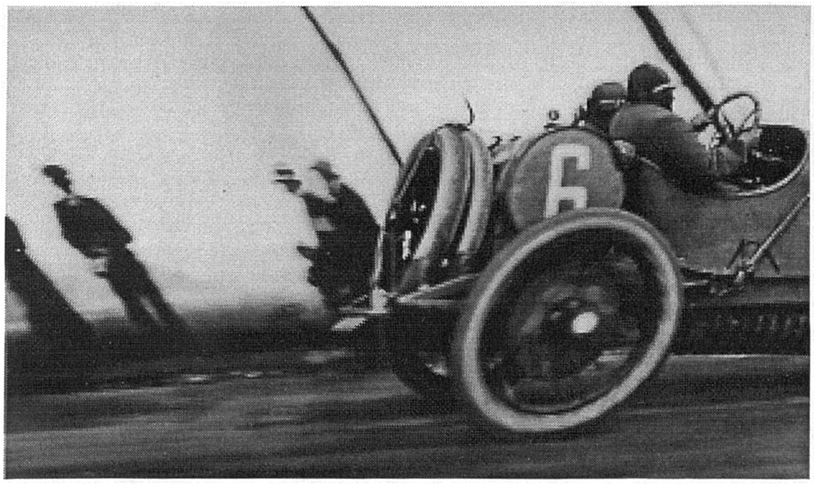


Figure 3.1
Jacques-Henri Lartigue: *Grand Prix de l'A.C.F., Automobile Delage, 1912.*

The suggestion of sheer terrifying speed and the highly dynamic, seemingly forward leaping of the car is an incredible accomplishment on the part of Jacques-Henri Lartigue, and equals or surpasses most current sports photographs of contemporary race-cars (which undoubtedly go much faster than this one). The result was obtained, *I suppose, to a large extent by sheer accident*. It had become possible, by 1912, to take pictures with handheld cameras (Freund 1980, Ford 1989), and one way of taking a photograph of a passing car is to 'drag' the camera along with it, that is, keeping the lens directed at the car by rotating it along, around one's body. However, the camera Lartigue was using had a vertical, rather slow shutter which moved from the bottom to the top of the frame when opening. That meant that the top part of the picture got exposed just a little later than the bottom of the photograph. Since the car was moving forward and the camera pointed to it (although a little towards the back, considering the framing of the car), the bottom of the rear wheel got exposed on film while the car was at one position, and the top just a little later, when the car had already moved a bit further. This has the effect of 'skewing' the car forward. The people, however, are explained by the camera being dragged along with the car, whereas the people did not move; they therefore distorted backwards. From this explanation it should be clear that such a movement indicator is distinctly photographic in nature. It is an example of the relative value of the statement that a photograph is 'true' even when it is granted that photographs are documents which fix reflections of objects on the basis of natural, optical laws. I would like to suggest, however, that Deaf people exploit similar strategies especially in story-telling. Moreover, I not only hold that Deaf people indeed exploit most, if not all, of the strategies indicated above, but that some of them may be based on photographic and filmic strategies of movement depiction such as blur, distortion and slow-motion, and others on more symbolic strategies related to cartoons.

Although this study does not focus on language expression, it is relevant to provide some examples here. Clearly, the relevance of these examples is in the support it provides not only for an interaction between language and social percepts and understanding outside language such as that which is provided in photographs, but also for the idea that some of the perceptual abilities are not language requirements but are potential sources of expression developed in other ways which enter into the language; I believe the depiction of movement is one such area of language expression which is based on cultural pictorial convention.

Arrested movement from a single vantage point

My interpretation of what this means is in fact the easiest to cover, but often shows Deaf visuality and its exploitation of movement depiction in language most clearly. The example I will focus on will cover many means of transportation, but my limited knowledge of signing brings up one example in relation to flying. If I asked you to depict for me, using your hands, the image of an aeroplane gaining speed prior to taking off, how would you depict this? I grant you that the the handshape for an aeroplane would be a fist, palm down, with little finger and thumb extended (Brien 1992:522–523). If you are hearing, my guess is that you would move that hand increasingly quickly in front of your body, probably across or away from it, before you 'run out' of arm length. Deaf people portray that differently in a very important respect. Imagining the taking off as a filmic action, they are not standing along the runway, as the description I just gave would suggest, while the aeroplane is moving by. Instead, the portrayal shows the aeroplane from a single continuous vantage point by *moving along with it: the 'aeroplane hand' stays in one fixed location* in front of the body, and it is the 'ground' that moves, that is the ground is being moved by placing the other hand flat underneath the aeroplane and moving it underneath the aeroplane, from front to back, in increasingly fast repeated movements, portraying the runway disappearing increasingly quickly underneath the aeroplane. That is imaginable as an act only through such pictorial conventions as illustrated by Jacques-Henri Lartigue's photograph earlier, and by having seen such filmic imagery, as it were, in cinemascope. Linguistically, the depiction is both efficient (the signer is not 'running out of arm') and iconically effective.

Movement as multiple viewpoints

This is a most common strategy of movement depiction exploited in BSL. It often occurs in signed stories involving travelling in a car, during which various scenes are depicted as filmic cademes (Worth and Gross 1981), cutting between depictions of the moving car to parts of the car, and from the perceptions and actions of people in the car to those of people seeing the car pass. This building of cademes by 'cutting' from one viewpoint to another does not only occur around fast movement, but can occur with such actions as rowing, cutting from the person who is doing the rowing to the boat moving through the water.

'Borrowing' information across scenes

This is, as far as I can tell, a less common strategy, but it does occur. Examples include the use of a 'hold', maintaining a certain stationary handshape configuration which acts as a holding classifier (Brennan 1990) while the other hand continues to narrate. I have come across an example during a signed story which involved a person canoeing. The signer depicted the movement of paddling first with both hands in a scene which described her going along nicely in the canoe. Then she maintained this paddling movement with one hand, while with the other hand she made a sign to the side of her head, the sign for 'thinking'. This describes two scenes, one where she is paddling along, and enjoying the scenery (using non-manual features such as eye gaze), then she 'cuts'to a form of close-up, which shows her starting to think about something, while still paddling along, indicated by the continued paddling movement of the hand.

Movement depiction through abstraction

Examples here abound, and there are examples which clearly borrow elements from conventions used in cartoons. For example, a fast-running animal may be depicted by it 'having legs like spinning wheels', which never fails to remind me of *The Flintstones* (I have on occasion even seen signed versions of the common 'speed' element in *Flintstone* cartoons, namely 'starting to run while remaining on the spot', showing the intent to run). A rocket moving out of sight can be signed by an outward and upward moving hand of which the tips of the extended index finger and thumb move towards each other and end up touching. Such signs are accompanied by nonmanual features such as pressed lips and narrowed eyes. And a football spinning through the air can be shown to 'whirl' through the air by having two 'H' hands (Brien 1992:xviii) circling alternately around each other.

Productive lexicon

There are also visual/pictorial movement conventions used in BSL vocabulary itself, most clearly visible in the productive lexicon. Brennan (1990) describes in impressive detail how in BSL new words can be formed, or the extent to which the morphology of the language is 'productive' (1990:7). Not only does she provide extensive coverage of the ways in which BSL exploits productive morphology, she also provides many examples. Brennan argues that iconic productivity not only covers signs which in some way 'look like' or refer to objects, but that at least some iconic productivity works through metaphoric relationships with referents (ibid:19ff.), leading into a description of visual metaphor. Brennan provides, under this notion, many examples which can equally well here serve as examples of a kind of 'creative use' of the visual perception of Deaf people in the language. For example, the signs Brennan provides for 'odour' and 'theory' (ibid:29) both involve an outward moving flat hand with wriggling fingers. In 'odour' the sign is placed in front of the nose, in 'theory' the hand is placed at the forehead. What is being depicted in this fashion is a symbolic movement, namely that of thought waves (or that which in the sixties might have been called 'vibes') or those of odorous vapors entering the nose. Although described by Brennan as creativity located within the language, I would suggest that such creative metaphor (as opposed to frozen forms) is not possible without prior perceptual knowledge which can propose such depiction in the first place. It seems to me that there are probably many more instances of creative morphological productivity which are based on this kind of visual approach to making sense of and communicating about the world.

A 'Deaf' perception of disability

There is a sense in which this section could have been part of the discussion in the previous chapter, models of the Deaf community. The idea that Deaf people are disabled is itself such a model and is both based on a Marxist/materialist account which describes a political economy of power relations (e.g. Oliver 1990) which effectively institutionalised disabled people as people in need of care, notably medical care and the social/financial care offered through charities. As an alternative, disabled activists have posited the model of a society which is effectively disabling people by not allowing them the same kind and amount of access to services and institutions as available to able-bodied people, claiming that people are therefore disabled as a result of a disabling social environment rather than as a result of mental or physical characteristics.

A currently widely held definition of disability among disabled people is that contained in the 1976 text *Fundamental principles of disability* published by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) as:

> "...the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities." (quoted in Oliver 1990:11)

Clearly many Deaf people can be included under that definition, since they often do have a physical impairment, and that often they are excluded from those mainstream social activities which are based on oral language, such as listening to the radio and watching programs broadcast under most of the television schedule, using public phones and entry phones, gaining higher education and entering certain professions, being a member of the jury in courtproceedings—the list goes on.

Disabled theorists have been carrying over these discussions from social theory into other areas such as psychology and social policy, and, notably deafness (Finkelstein 1980, 1987, 1988, 1993a, 1993b, Morrison and Finkelstein 1993, Oliver1990). Finkelstein incorporates Deaf people in an aggregate of disabled people on the basis of this notion of disability as a form of social discrimination. Even though Deaf people themselves may prefer to see their discrimination in linguistic/cultural terms, the argument of disabled theorists such as Finkelstein is that the commonality of the grounds of discrimination is greater than the differences between the two 'disabled' groups (Finkelstein 1990). Finkelstein's viewpoint is gravely different from the viewpoint of many Deaf people themselves (e.g. Bienvenu 1989a, 1989b, Silver 1992, See Hear! 1993), when he observes that denial of disability is a common factor across that aggregate (1993a:13), that Deaf people share with other disabled groups the fact that they cannot hear and thus share with other disabled people a form of physical or mental handicap (1989, 1990), and that their use of sign language also evidences the presence of barriers to using it located in society (1990, 1993a:13–14). I stress here the visual nature of the word 'viewpoint', because I suggest, on the basis of the discussion preceding this section, that the visual nature of Deaf people's worldmaking indeed works against perceiving themselves as disabled persons. It is in this context important that a Deaf person, in a televised *See Hear!* debate (1993), claimed that Deaf people are not disabled "...like people in a wheelchair". In my view there is in play here a definite act of a symbolic and iconic imagination based on visual ability and the expression of it through language. In order to be more explicit, I think that the signer, Frances, used her ability for role-shift, her productive lexicon, and her abilities in depicting movement through signing in her expression of a person in a wheelchair. We must imagine here that a Deaf person, in considering disability, does not so much consider the 'viewpoint' of a disabled person in the verbal cognitive sense in which hearing people, including disabled hearing people, do, but that Frances' visual abilities and symbolic imagination as it were transports her into a wheelchair. She does quite literally take the viewpoint of a disabled person, which includes a spatial manipulation of a 'disabling' environment, seen from a perspective dramatically closer to the ground than the usual upright vantage-point of her ordinary, real experience. In addition she becomes a disabled person through her linguistic exploitation of role-shift, movement depiction, and the kinæsthetic ability of copying quite precisely how a disabled person would move and physically comport herself. To Frances, I argue, such an experience is not just deviant from what she experiences as a Deaf person: it represents the strange in a quite disturbing way.

This is not to suggest that this is the only, or indeed the foremost problem Deaf people have in considering themselves as disabled people, or that such imagination would suffice in order for hearing people to accept that Deaf people are not disabled. There are many reasons which to hearing (dis)abled people appear rather less emotional although not therefore necessarily more rational. An impressive catalogue of such reasons as have been presented by Deaf people appears in a recent article by Harlan Lane (1995). An important argument presented by Lane is that disabled people gather for political action, whereas Deaf people gather for socialising (1995:180). This is grave generalisation on behalf of disabled people and Deaf people (e.g. Harris 1995a chs 6 and 7), but it does provide a sense of priority. Equally, Lane suggests that Deaf people have good reasons to refuse disability status, since

> "It is because disability advocates think of Deaf children as disabled that they want to close the special schools and absurdly plunge Deaf children into hearing classrooms in a totally exclusionary program called inclusion. [...] It is because of the disability construction that the teachers most able to communicate with Britain's Deaf children are excluded from the profession on the pretext that they have a disqualifying disability" (Lane 1995:182).

In disability theories such as that forwarded by Finkelstein, Lane suggests, Deaf people are victims of mistaken identity:

> "People with disabilities should no more resist the self-construction of culturally Deaf people, than Deaf people should subscribe to a view of people with disabilities as tragic victims of an inherent flaw." (Lane 1995:183)

The suggestion put forward in this study is that Deaf people's self-construction is partly based on particular visual ability and a visual imagination, which is here called a 'Deaf' visuality. Since there are close relationships between this Deaf visuality and BSL, there is experiential argument grounded in visual cognition, rather than mere viewpoint expressed literally, in the signed sentence "Deaf people are not disabled [like] people in a wheelchair are".

Doing sociology of visual knowledge

4

"There is still a widely held assumption that though sociologists themselves may study and analyse visual representation, the underlying assumption itself is separate from the visual domain: the verbal analyses the visual." (Chaplin 1994:2)

"Popular photography, if we think of a set of family snapshots, seems likely to violate [...] expectations of public drama. It is, for example, characteristically private, in that it is mainly shown only to the intimates who commonly constitute the subject matter. And yet in the conformism of pose and setting and composition there seem likely to be collective concerns. Although the subject matter is typically considered non-dramatic in that the scenes depicted are usually mundane or unremarkable, there are powerful conventions in forms of representation." (Chaney 1993:82)

What I intend to achieve in this chapter is to set out the conditions under which it becomes possible to 'make visible' a particular visuality (in this case that of the people who have co-operated in the projects discussed in the next chapters), and to describe that visuality—not firstly in words, but initially as representations of that visuality in graphic representations, namely photographs, as part of a discussion of visual sociology. Much as I have done in previous chapters with the sociology of deafness and with neurology of perception, my intention is not to provide a history of visual sociology (that has been undertaken elsewhere, see notably Chaplin 1994). Rather I will address various forms of visual sociology simply to the extent to which they are able to provide appropriate methodology for my purposes, or the extent to which they illuminate assumptions made by researchers as to the potential (and value) of pictorial information in the social sciences.

Chaplin

Chaplin, in her book *Sociology and Visual Representation*, has divided her material into two basic categories, one category based on a 'critical paradigm', the other on an 'empirical paradigm' of visual sociology. As she explains, the critical paradigm constitutes a theoretical analysis of "the inequalities existing between social strata based on its vision of a more equitable future" (Chaplin

1994:14). I would suggest that not all research undertaken under this paradigm has striven towards such a noble cause, but rather that 'tastes', or 'styles' (Bourdieu 1990), or a 'collective vision' (Chaney 1993) serve distinct functions, such as forms of association based on social class argued for by Bourdieu, or the maintenance of a public memory, ceremony and a rationality of public order as discussed in Chaney. However, what is often shared by these commentators is that their narrative is based strictly within verbal discourse, and that visual perception is approached in terms of it constituting a 'universal' act, on the basis of an understanding of the process of perception itself.

The focus in the theoretical paradigm is entirely on representations as narrative form, and although this narrative form may well vary between social spheres, there is inherent agreement that visual perception is a mode with a single code—in Chaney's terms, discussions of the very potential of representations as reflecting a diversity of form is assumed to be endlessly regressive, and is either left to the criticism of æsthetic theory (e.g. Wolff 1981, 1983, Eco 1989, Sheppard 1989) or, if it is discussed at all, as merely reflecting 'taste' (Bourdieu 1986, 1989). Visual perception is only treated as cultural in so far as perceptions are reflected through different kinds of narratives, usually linked to issues of power and control in sociology and critical theory. Examples of such discussions appear in diverse areas of sociology: Bourdieu 1990, Burgin 1993, Chaney 1993 and Tagg 1988 on representations and social theory, Goffman 1979 and Goldman 1992 on representations and advertising, Hevey 1992, Hirsch 1981, Holland 1992, Noble 1987, Spence 1995, Spence and Holland 1991 on representations of minorities or the powerless, and Grover 1989, Pollock 1990, Sontag 1979, various texts in Squiers 1990 and Williams 1987 on representations of women or sexuality. In one or two cases, the underlying assumption about a general state of perception makes possible a discussion of control in a more literal sense, namely the rights of the original 'author' of the representation to control the pictorial narrative, particularly in photojournalism (e.g. Becker 1991). In social psychology, photographic representations are occasionally used in similar 'blanket perception' fashion as reflecting psychic state, orientations and welfare (e.g. Akeret 1973, Ziller and Smith 1977 and Ziller 1990). In visual anthropology, visual perception and pictorial representations are equally generally regarded as a collective outward gaze extending from one's own culture to that of others. But here the value of such representations is now being discussed, as it is in critical theory and minority representations, and there is increasing reference to the potential for different kinds of cultural coding in pictorial representation (e.g various texts in Edwards 1994 and Taylor 1994), although, apart from Worth and Gross (1981) in their study of filmic practice in ethnographies, few studies make reference to specific examples. Sol Worth refers specifically to a study undertaken in relation to the American Deaf community which provides partial support for the idea of a different 'Deaf' perception:

> "Recent work done by one of my students, Earl Higgins, seems to indicate that even among the congenitally deaf, the 'grammar' and related patterns of their sign language influence how speakers of American Sign Language structure films that they make." (Worth and Gross 1981:191)

The support in this quote for Deaf visuality is partial because differences in filmic structure do seem closely related to language pattern.

There is no reference to the possibility that filmic content might reflect a different social or cultural coding of information such as witnessed in seventeenth century Dutch painting by Alpers in the previous chapter. It is important to note, however, that although Alpers' work was first published in 1983—two years after Worth and Gross' book—there seems to have been less concern with late modern interpretations of scopic regimes and the ocular nature of current societies in anthropology and sociology than in the more visual æsthetics oriented practices of art history and the philosophy of art.

It is imperative to note that bringing these studies together here is solely for the purpose of illustrating the ubiquity (and, in the case of Worth and Gross, an exception to that ubiquity) of social science academic writing operating with a 'blanket' conception of visual perception, a blanket conception based on what undoubtedly are very different assumptions, starting points and research needs. Outside this frame, all the studies mentioned above offer distinct contributions to a variety of totally different kinds and levels of discussion which are now taking place in relation to visual representation.

As Stasz (1979) notes, although photography and sociology proved a happy empirical marriage before the turn of the twentieth century, photography disappears from the scholarly sociological journal the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1914, not to return until the seventies (Stasz 1979:131). This is a notable fact mostly because Stasz relates it to a turn of the century positivistic feeling that sociology, as practice, should move towards quantitative approaches as witnessed in more 'pure' disciplines such as physics (ibid:132). This links the exploitation in sociology of photographic representation directly to the dominance of a Cartesian scopic regime, the 'disenchantment' of the eye (Jay 1993, Slater 1995) and the evaluation of worth of pictorial information. So the ubiquity of the blanket conception of visual perception illustrated above will likely be grounded in a specific, dominant ontology of perception, which is to some extent ocularcentrist.

This may help to explain why, under Chaplin's empirical paradigm, references to studies which make use of photographic data are without exception based on methodologies which treat these images as supportive or generative. By supportive I mean an approach which could be (and often before has been) done without photographs but which is deemed more 'rounded' with them or serves to simulate a greater realist connectedness between researcher/reader and topic, and by generative I mean that photographs are being used as 'prompts', most often to stimulate or guide interviews. What these methodologies have in common is that the photographs used serve as illustrations (translated into verbal narratives) of phenomena which themselves are not grounded in visual perception, but can be reflected in that mode. The clearest example of both supportive and generative use of photographs is in Chaplin's own employment of photographs in a collaborative research excercise she undertook with a formal group of artists in the UK. Her photographic diary is supportive to the extent that it served to help her connect to a group of subjects whose lives centre around visual expression:

> "I realised that however much I familiarised myself with the artist's culture, I remained an outsider to the extent that I did not have a formal visual project. And without such a project, the whole informal area of craft and tacit craft knowledge could only be talked about at second-hand" (Chaplin 1994:8).

Also illustrated in the quote is that her formal visual project served to generate discussions that would otherwise not have taken place in her presence, or might have taken place but on a different, less typical, level: that is generative use of photographs. Since the phenomena Chaplin investigates do not, strictly speaking, pertain to visual perception itself but rather are based on perception and can therefore be expressed in or reflected by pictorial representation, what does not happen in Chaplin's visual sociology is that her photographs are discussed as pertinent expressions of a particular visuality in their own right. Instead they are read as verbal narratives which reflect phenomena containing visible (iconic or symbolic) elements; this is effectively to reduce photographs to the level of Barthes' description of photography being a mode without a code:

> "Photography is unclassifiable because there is no reason to mark this or that of its occurrences; it aspires, perhaps, to become as crude, as certain, as noble as a sign, which would afford it access to the dignity of a language: but for there to be a sign there must be a mark; deprived of a principle of marking, photographs are signs which don't take, which turn, as milk does." (Barthes 1984:6)

The reductionism which reduces photography to something less 'dignified' than language is wholly unremarkable in the case of the semiotic theory proposed by Barthes, since the semiotic approach taken by Barthes and many other students of photographs is itself entirely based upon linguistic theory and therefore depends upon an ability to express shared (in the sense of conventional) symbolic meaning through 'principled' pattern and structure, as indeed the originator of semiotics, the linguist Ferdinand Saussure, outlined himself. It entirely bypasses the possibility that 'signifiers', as pictorial elements are called in semiotics, stand for themselves and relate to human thought without having to signify linguistically to the 'signified', as the discussion on the close relationship between visual perception and thought made clear in the previous chapter. Photographs communicate because they refer iconically to what is in our perceptual field; in Gibson's words:

> "Pictures are artificial displays of of information frozen over time." (Gibson 1986:71)

This means that, whatever else they do, photographs simply show something that was there, and it is often overlooked that in many uses of photography that claim is in operation. At least as far as visual sociology is concerned, the interpretation of pictorial data can be legitimately based on that similar claim. Chaney engages in a discussion of the nature of collectivity in popular photography on that basis:

> "The claim of the representation is that it is faithful to what is to be seen. The conventional character of this, as of any other form of representation, has been frequently commented upon, but deconstructing the rhetoric *of the image does not dent its commonsense facticity. The story the* photograph tells is of the way reality was on this particular occasion." (Chaney 1993:85)

What I want to address here is similarly not the relationship of photographic narrative to our linguistic understanding of language, but the idea that 'the story of the photograph' is partly 'told' in its apperception, and that this visual appreciation is to some extent subject to cultural convention.

collective vision

Chaney

It is worth going somewhat deeper into David Chaney's work on what he terms the 'theme' of photography. I will attempt here briefly to note the parts of his construction most relevant to the discussion here; since his discussion is in great depth and arguments are intricately woven together, I want to make it explicit that my representation here cannot stand in any way as a 'summary' of Chaney's text.

Chaney constructs popular photography as a cultural form, which concerns itself with the "social institution of a type of cultural activity" (Chaney 1993:83). His discussion is one of photography as a social activity acted out along a path of narrowly defined social agreement in all stages of the photographic act, the taking of photographs, the keeping of photographs and the viewing of photographs in various settings. Although engagement in such social activity often results in forms of gratification to those partaking, the activity itself is also framed economically by an exploitative photographic industry and politically through the effects it has on maintaining public order. According to Chaney, three elements are involved in the construction of popular photography as cultural form. First is the social organisation of production, second the narrative of the photograph which provides the meaning, and third the social occasions of being included in one or more stages of the photographic act. Chaney also suggests that there are potentially several cultural forms, and then enters into what seems to me to be a more materialist account of those forms.

What is pertinent here is that photography as a cultural form is, using the title of Chaney's book, a fictional form of a collective, that is, a social aggregate. Photographs are not a haphazard jumble of pictorial elements in so far as their production and consumption is regulated by social agreement which frames their content in terms of social norms: photographs are cultural products. Furthermore, as Chaney proposes, photographs are interpreted along social canons:

> "The social occasion of photographic picturing is spectatorial—there is an endless and ubiquitous parade of images of ourselves at which we look as at a performance. As well as the incidental pleasure of particular insights, the more general pleasure is seeing and ordering the particular as the general." (Chaney 1993:86)

Ordering the particular as the general is abstracting away from that which is personal to that which is shared socially and culturally. As I discussed in the previous chapter, such 'abstraction' can be based largely in visual perception itself, in seeing photographs. This discussion of photographs as a cultural form is particularly relevant in the case of the Deaf community, where what is shared culturally, as I pointed out earlier, is in part grounded in the visuality of the 'Deaf way'. The visuality of Deaf people is characterised in general terms by the Deaf way as that which is available to Deaf people but not to hearing people and which has to be external to language (chapter 3). These general features I argue are of necessity reflected in the particular of popular photographs taken by Deaf people, since the attention Deaf people pay to their environment, as various commentators have pointed out, is a central organising principle in their lives (e.g. Erting 1987). And furthermore, as I will aim to photographically and literally illustrate in the chapter on my experience of the Deaf club, such photographs play a significant role in the Deaf way.

Photographs and text as 'first-hand' data

The research presented in the next three chapters has been based on the observations made and arguments presented in the course of the text so far. In terms of a photographic approach to visual phenomena implied in the Deaf way, this necessarily resulted in my adopting a dualistic methodology in relation to gathering data. I felt that it was important to have 'first-hand' data on the visual perception of Deaf people. The reason for placing 'first-hand' between single inverted commas is that I wanted first-hand data in the way that term is generally understood in social science: for example, direct observation notes, and quotations obtained through interviews are considered to be 'first-hand' data. In the case of photographs we generally acknowledge that they are second-order representations of an external reality, which is actually simply to say that they are pictures of things. However, I suggest that in exactly that same way observation notes and quotations *are* also pictures of an external reality. They are reductions of events to that which can be recorded in alphabetic writing. What distinguishes pictorial kinds of data from written kinds of data is that pictorial data refer to visual communication strategies, and written kinds to verbal communication strategies. Considering how rare visual data are in social science, and therefore how difficult it may be to imagine such data, I will point to an example of the use of visual data where verbal data are not possible, in this case in paleontology. This example is provided by Stephen Jay Gould, in his book *Wonderful Life*. In it, he describes what is required in order to be able to extract from the squashed, messy fossillised imprint on a piece of stone a plausible reconstruction of a living organism which has never been seen before:

> "This activity requires visual, or spatial, genius of an uncommon and particular sort. I can understand how this work proceeds, but I could never do it myself—and I am here relegated to writing about the Burgess Shale. The ability to reconstruct three-dimensional form from flattened squashes, to integrate a score of specimens in differing orientations into a single entity, to marry disparate pieces on parts and counterparts into a functional whole—these are rare and precious skills." (Gould 1991:100)

The visual anthropologist Sol Worth argues that such 'visual literacy' is indeed uncommon, since the very idea of science is based on verbal language skill, and notably writing (see also Illich and Sanders 1988). Increasingly, he predicts, visual literacy will become a necessary skill in doing science, a view shared with Davies et al. (1990), who predict "the return of the picture" (Davies et al. 1990:2). As Worth puts it:

> "An ethnography of communication developed on the basis of verbal language alone cannot cope with man in an age of visual communication. It is necessary to develop theories and methods for

> describing and analyzing how men show each other who they are and how they are [...] the anthropologist is however, most often 'mute' (there is no word in English to refer to those who cannot make movies) in film." (Worth and Gross 1981:95)

Although I am reluctant to support Worth's categorical statement about the 'age of visual communication', the relevance of it in relation to the British Deaf community will be directly obvious. Not only has the Deaf community developed historically on the basis of communication grounded in visual perception and largely unrecorded cultural transmission, the visual/gestural language which has developed between Deaf people has no conventional written (i.e. symbolic) form whatsoever. Given this context, using verbal data written in English would seem to be an inappropriate step away from using first-hand data in the exploration of the visuality of the 'Deaf way'.

This is also to problematise directly such use of verbal data in relation to the British Deaf community. It must be clear that in using such data, for example spoken interpretations of signed statements, the researcher abstracts away from an external reality, not like a picture does from three to two dimensions, but from an event which included sound to a representation of only sound. And whereas photographs can simply be placed in the research report, in the case of the audio-recording another step is required, namely the transcription (which is actually a translation) of oral information into a complex pattern of symbolic pictures, that which we commonly call text. This transcription is therefore in fact a third-order representation which contributes its own visual expression such as typeface and layout (Chaplin 1995:248) and constitutes a shift in both mode (from sound to sight) and code (magnetic pattern to picture pattern). Transcribing again abstracts information, because *writing does not contain information on accent and intonation*, to name two characteristics of oral language not present in conventional written data. Since science operates with a narrow view of what constitutes language, we are happy to agree that the third-order written pictures distilled from the interview as event is a wholly accurate, 'true' reflection of the core information contained in the original event, that is, that these third-order pictures are first-hand data; indeed, without such agreement products of social science are hard to imagine. For example, Illich and Sanders remark in their book *The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* that it is the alphabet that, like a sort of paper memory, allows for the storage of knowledge:

> "Like words and text, memory is a child of the alphabet. Only after it had become possible to fix the flow of speech in phonetic transcription did the idea emerge that knowledge—information—could be held in a mind as in a store." (Illich and Sanders 1988:15)

Science is made possible by written text. But visual/gestural languages such as BSL have no written form, and the recording of interviews conducted in BSL become complex actions involving multiple stages. For example, the study undertaken by Harris (1995a) contains 'first-hand' interview data procured by Harris herself, and 'first-hand' representations are provided thus:

> "Veronica: Grandmother had 6 children—I'm the 7th—I was the baby with grandma—I thought grandma was called mum. I don't know why my mother (did that) now my mother is very old now and she has a problem with arthritis—it's all over her—it's very bad. She says please come and see me but I never—I don't know how." (Harris 1995a:50)

Totally in line with social method convention, Harris does not provide information on how the visual/gestural expression got represented as the pictures shown here, but I speculate that is has gone somewhat like this: Jennifer Harris watches Veronica's signed expression (first-order), translates that expression from BSL into spoken English (second-order), records that spoken English onto an audio-recorder (third-order) and later transcribes the tape into written pictures called text (fourth-order). In addition it is important to note that all these representations are being produced by the researcher. To accept these data as conventional first-hand data means that we accept a fourth generation representation of expression as unproblematic first-hand data merely on the presumption that all the representational moves retained the linguistic essence of what was signed.

It is clear that scientific method is based on presumptions that privilege a very narrow interpretation of language and experience. Yet the amount of information that has been lost in this case is phenomenal. If such data are being used to examine the statements that Deaf people make on certain topics, there is no reason to distrust the written data as long as they are accurately translated and transcribed (which in the case of Harris is not beyond doubt, since she does not provide information on either the technique or the quality of those processes). However, if such data are being used to make judgements on the nature of the Deaf community and its culture, they can be no more than partial, one-sided and verbal interpretations by a most likely visually illiterate researcher of a community and culture in which visual perception plays a crucial defining role. To comment, therefore, as Harris does that the sign DEAF CULTURE employed by Deaf people is based on a set of ill-defined and misconceived principles is a wholly irresponsible reduction of a socially shared and meaningful conception of community experience by a visually illiterate researcher to a shallow interpretation of what culture consists of. For example, when she states:

> "...empirical research has not established that 'Deaf culture' exists or what form it takes if it does exist. The indiscriminate use of these terms, I assert here, does not aid the analysis and description of Deafness as a social phenomenon, or further the cause of those people who are seriously questioning the definition and meaning of Deafness." (Harris 1995a:12)

Harris not only hints at a very narrow-minded and unimaginative view of what 'serious' questioning entails, she also misinterprets a lack of empirical evidence as proof that there is no such thing as Deaf culture. As I have argued, no research to date has concentrated on a structural exploration of the visual themes in Deaf peoples lives, although commentators do agree not only on their presence but their necessity as well. I can only conclude that Harris is unable to imagine a culture which does not operate on the basis of a similar dominance of verbal modes of representation and recording as does her own. Although she claims to have learned not only to

> "...communicate effectively in BSL, but to eat, sleep, and breathe BSL..." (Harris 1995b:2) .

she seems nevertheless unable, as indeed Deaf people claimed of hearing people in general (Kyle and Woll 1989:9) to imagine, let alone understand, the Deaf way. In the light of both traditional forms of sociology of deafness and Harris' work, I find it unremarkable that Deaf people appear increasingly reluctant to welcome hearing researchers in their midst, since with what probably seems to Deaf people to be nauseating stubbornness they continue to misconstrue and misrepresent the 'views' of Deaf people themselves on the basis of data invariably provided and discussed—as they are much to my regret here—in written English. This comment is at the same time a criticism of both the practice and regulations of 'good science' often adhered to in the face of better judgement; despite the opportunities offered by new technologies such as (digital) video imaging, CD-ROM platforms and multi-media texts, 'good science' continues to demand a core presentation of sheer written text. It appears that text is the only way in this institution in which we can perceive storing and organising knowledge. In the case of Deaf people, this not only hampers alternative presentations of pertinent social phenomena,but it also discriminates against Deaf people by effectively barring access to scientific records which bear directly on their own position, experiences and circumstance on the basis of linguistic competence in English.

Notes from the visual field

In working with photographs as first-hand data, there are still two main options, and I hope to have covered both in this study. The first option, which is much like doing fieldwork, involves an effort to consciously and analytically describe the 'visual field' of—in this case—a local Deaf club. The photographs thus presented are 'notes' entirely resulting from my observation, my particular perception, in exactly the same way that an ethnographer's written notes are the result of his or her observation and perception. In photography, this excercise is called a 'documentary', and indeed that is what it is: the eleven hundred and eighty photographs are a document which contains a visual representation of what I deemed was worthy of representing visually in the context of this study. It is a surveying of the field which is presented here to allow for, in

Collier and Collier's terms (1986:ch.15), an 'open viewing procedure' to take place. I wish however, to discriminate between documentary expression as it is engaged in here and documentaries as they have been defined through such practices as undertaken historically by photographers like Riis, Hine, Evans, Heartfield, etc., as described in Braden (1983) and Stott (1973). Both commentators describe the development of the 'documentary' in terms of a particular practice as a result of a set of functions which documentaries were supposed to perform. Stott describes documentary as a spectacle of first-hand experience, expressing an 'immediate' social ill which is itself far removed from the audience the documentary addresses. The documentary shows the 'human dimension' (ibid:14–19) in its particular form as the essence of social wrong (ibid:48) in a necessarily propagandistic manner. In short, documentary:

> "...has an axe to grind. It works through the emotions of the members of its audience to shape their attitude toward certain public facts." (Stott 1973:21)

This describes documentary very much as a narrative form, which is indeed the context of Stott's discussion of documentary, as a form of expression unlike traditional ones in the sense that documentary's content is (deemed to be) true (ibid:ix).

In addition, John Tagg describes the intellectual and social context in which it was possible for such 'engaged' documentary expression to become æstheticised and consequently disengaged as artistic expression, shifting the context of the documentary to that of the museum where discussions took place in the realms of 'pure' æsthetic, rather than on the knife-edge interface of dominant and minority groups in society (Tagg 1988:14–15). At the end of his book, Tagg argues that it has become necessary to analyse the concrete material practices of documentary expression, and clarify the particular functions of those engaged in it. In largely similar vein, Braden, in describing different, possible kinds of collaboration between photographers and subjects reminds us that documentary most often engendered indignation on behalf of a class or minority, specifically in an audience which was typically not part of such a class or minority (Braden 1983:4). This perfectly describes power-relations involved in a particular dominant direction of perception: it was not poor people, or a minority, who portrayed themselves to a dominant class or social group, but most often a representative of a dominant social group who 'illustrated' a social ill on behalf of those represented.

This description of documentary practice is significant here because it is based on the same assumptions as the kind of sociology of deafness outlined in chapter 1 and most notably the Deaf community models discussed in chapter 2. Documentaries here form *istorias*, pictorial narratives told outside any particular viewpoint: the narrative form is not presented as a particular viewpoint of a photographer's eye or 'I', but as the viewpoint of an (engaged or outraged) collective vision, hiding the fact that the documentary, as a cultural product, is the result of social relations engaged in a particular, directional perception. In her conclusion, Braden too notes that it is important, notably for social minorities, to develop visual literacy and take control over the viewfinder:

> "To achieve cultural synthesis as opposed to succumbing to cultural invasion, access to control over the publicised photograph and understanding how images communicate messages is an essential first step." (Braden 1983:118)

This is also to imply that currently there is very little knowledge on how exactly photography functions within social relations and the representation of social groups. What is needed is a critical understanding of the 'social vocabulary' with which documentary operates:

> "...there is no conceptualisation of the complex network of persons, positions, expectancies, and conventions which make up photography within society. Until this is formulated in more detail, it will be difficult for sociologists to clarify either their role as visual sociologists or the impact of their photography on the subject." (Cheatwood and Stasz 1979:268)

As Beloff observed:

> "The camera is at the same time an instrument of science and of art, of personal motive, and of the collective vision." (Beloff 1985:77)

To the extent that photographers are "trapped in their own cultural milieu" (Beloff 1985:125), my photographs of a Deaf club reflect my own æsthetic preference, my own middle-class social background, my own 'personal motives', which I have attempted to outline in this volume, and will consistently contain elements and show preferences resulting from an education in applied arts; but equally, they are first-hand sociological data which have been collected during the otherwise entirely conventional, methodologically accepted activity of conducting fieldwork, and they will be treated here accordingly. In my discussion of these photographs of the Deaf club I will focus on sociologically pertinent information that is contained in the photographs as a cultural frame: they are pictures of a culture, they are photographs of Deaf people who are members of the British Deaf community and they are photographs of the activities in which they were engaged at the time. The photographs are presented here as visual data which are more directly correlated, in terms of the visual information contained in them, to these people and the events portrayed than a written account such as a compilation of fieldnotes could have been.

Visual statements as direct quotes

Another kind of first-hand data are quotationss from Deaf people themselves. This kind of data is most strongly associated with qualitative research, and that is precisely the approach I had in mind when I asked a number of people to take photographs for me. Ziller (1990) decribes various projects in which the researcher asked 'subjects' specific questions, to which the subjects were asked, according to Ziller, to answer in photographs (Ziller 1990:10). Ziller terms this approach auto-photography, in which data are generated which can be subjected to "systematic observation" (ibid:10). Ziller's is once more a positivistic, Cartesian approach in which the particular vantage point of the researcher—indeed, the suggestion that in the act of observation anything other than detached and objective perception of natural events takes place—is totally unacknowledged. Systematic observation is defined as an act of:

> "...sustained, explicit, methodical, observing and paraphrasing of social situations in relation to their naturally *occuring contexts...*" *(Ziller 1990:14)*

The only explicit intervention of the researcher occurs in the required paraphrasing of otherwise 'natural' events, so that a more limited and explicit set of meanings can be inferred; what is elsewhere (e.g. Chaney 1993) understood to be the result of a collective perception is here lifted out by the psychologist as worthy of attention and indicative of individual and particular psychic states or well-being since photographs are a source of information on the (inter)personal. A clear example of such an approach is provided by a psychiatrist, Robert Akeret, who not only has come to see himself, judging by the text, as an expert in visual literacy but as one whose judgement of photographic content is both final and absolute. The example that follows is in a passage worth quoting in full:

> "'Here's one where my mother is holding me in her arms when I was a baby. Doesn't she look at me adoringly? Look at her loving eyes.'
>
> Alexi was submitting his evidence, beaming with satisfaction. My eyes travelled from his face to the photo; I was shocked. His mother was holding him all right, but she looked depressed, totally uninterested in her son.
>
> 'Where's the adoring look you see...and those loving eyes?' I challenged.
>
> 'Right there on her face...there', he countered, but not very convincingly.
>
> 'Where?', I snapped. 'All I see is an unhappy, burdened woman.'
>
> Finally Alexi saw what I saw; no matter what his fantasy needs told him, he could not deny what the photograph had captured, and documented. The reality of the photograph had forced Alexi to challenge his compulsive, conscious belief that his mother had loved him blindly." (Akeret 1973:23)

The quote not only bears witness to a singularly strong belief in a right and a wrong (or false) reading of a photograph, but also a strong belief in the idea that a photograph reflects an inviolate truth, available to a detached and visually literate observer, but a truth distorted by the perception of someone who has particular, abnormal 'fantasy needs'. What is exploited by Akeret is the idea that there is a real world which is symbolically inviolate. Using a strategy of value attribution, it then becomes possible to uncover gaps between what is 'actually' happening and an 'incorrect' perception of it. The question then becomes, what did the picture depict, a burdened woman or a happy mother? Worth suggests that:

> "It seems that all we can say is that what they depict is. [...] Pictures are of themselves not propositions that make true or false statements" (Worth and Gross 1981:179)

In other words, the photograph shows a woman with a child, and there might be more or less agreement, in this case between patient and psychiatrist, on the relationship between that woman and that child: the photograph does not comment on itself, it merely depicts. In this case, agreement was reached rather predictably as a result of a doctor-patient relationship in which the professional assumed control over the meaning of the image in his capacity as visually literate expert. It must also be remembered that Alexi has invested interest in taking the expert's 'view', since he must have considered himself in need of such expert attentions as offered only by a professional psychiatrist. In Akeret's eyes, there is therefore continuous re-affirmation of his self-perception as being visually expert in the analysis of photographs in the repeated confirmation of his patients that something was indeed 'wrong' with them, and that—if Akeret said so—this would probably indeed be confirmed by 'evidence' contained in the photographic records of their lives. This kind of photo-analysis seems based on Helmholtz' understanding of perception as distorted by misperceptions and experience, whereas 'true', untainted and accurate perception is the prerogative of the visually literate experts. Whereas Helmholtz located such privileged objective vision in the perceptions of visual artists, Akeret places it in himself and locates any deviation in the realm of mental illness.

Ziller

A more systematically descriptive approach has been undertaken by Ziller (Ziller and Smith 1977, Ziller 1990), in his various 'auto-photography' projects in which subjects take photographs of themselves according to highly specific briefs. Ziller's preoccupation in studying photographs is mainly as visually expressed perceptions of self in relation to environment, which results in data that provide information about orientations—for example the photographs that were recorded by wheelchair-users and walking subjects of their daily environments (Ziller and Smith 1977)—or as perceptions of ideological concepts (such as 'peace'), which results in free image associations to particular verbal stimuli (e.g. Ziller 1990 ch.3). Interpretation proceeds mainly on the basis of detailed quantitative analysis on content variables. An example in which qualitative interpretation proceeds on the basis of quantification is where Ziller describes photographs taken on a campus by five disabled students in wheelchairs. In comparison to 'walking' subjects, their photographs show markedly less eye-contact:

> "Through the eyes of the handicapped person we experience avoidance. We see bodies without eyes. We do not see a group but a wall of people (from wheelchair height, people are tall). We are viewing civil inattention." (Ziller 1990:127)

In their 1977 article, Ziller and Smith arrive at a conclusion to this same project which is worth quoting here in its own right:

> "Extensions to the approach are readily suggested, such as [...] exploring the environment of persons who are deaf or depressed." (Ziller and Smith 1977:182).

What depressed and deaf persons have in common, according to Ziller and Smith, is our lack of understanding of people who may have difficulty in communicating their special orientation (ibid:178). The observation made in relation to Deaf people actually shows remarkable foresight, although it is based on an entirely different perception of Deaf people than the one I would subscribe to. That which Ziller describes as 'orientation' is defined as "behaviors associated with self definition which indicate increased motivation to respond to certain signs in the environment" (Ziller 1990:142), which is indeed (barr the psychological vocabulary) a similar claim made for each individual as I am making for a collective in suggesting that Deaf people share a collective vision and behaviour which is 'motivated', that is, the result of the need to be in contact with the environment. What Ziller, in his analysis, focuses on is individual visual perception, whereas I am interested here in a collective vision. Ziller confirms such collective vision in his own work, when he writes that:

> "The development of the self-concept is not simply internal, however, but evolves in interaction with the environment, including the social environment [...] it will be readily noted that different self-concepts necessarily emerge within different environments and in different behavioral contexts [...] Indeed, the environment and behaviors are the warp and woof of the theory of the self." (Ziller 1990:29)

I want to suggest here that all Ziller's data in his book are worked not into different perceptions of self as Ziller claims, but different collective perceptions. In the very act of calculating significances, Ziller operates with aggregates of social groups, such as the perceptions of men vs. those of women, those of German children vs. those of American and Japanese children, and indeed those of disabled versus non-disabled persons. Particular examples he provides through the photographs themselves only serve as particular instances of a vision which has become statistically significant because significance has been calculated on the basis of social aggregate groupings. Therefore, what Ziller describes is not in the first instance diversity in individual perceptions, but agreement in collective visions.

The second type of first-hand data I will be using is to a degree of the type described by Ziller, and indeed the approach I have taken leans heavily on Ziller's. There are a few important differences, but rather than set out here an inappropriate comparison between our approaches (inappropriate because the contexts of both studies are entirely different), methodology in both first-hand data gathering activities becomes the topic of the rest of this chapter.

Method

A now retired sociologist once commented while we discussed chairing public presentations during a conference (of which I myself have no experience) that when there are no pertinent questions arising after a paper has been presented, there is always the option for the chair to raise the issue of method. There are a number of interesting implications in this statement. The first is that, despite a wide variety of publications in which method is addressed, method is not a very popular topic of debate. Yet at the same time, one can rest assured that sociologists will be able to (and probably indeed will) disagree with colleagues on the issues of method. Thirdly, papers probably share with written research reports the fact that most often a description of method is only summarily provided—if at all. And the last observation is that although method is clearly something which is necessarily part of the research project, it is nevertheless often treated as somehow divorced from the results obtained rather than, as far as I can make out, intricately entwined with all parts of the excercise, and often being as decisive a factor in the (lack of) control a researcher has over what is occurring in the study as are financial resources and time pressures. However, one can always start with good intentions, and this critical reference indicates the relative and contextual character of research methodology that I want to bear out with these opening remarks.

Visual sociologists have continuously had to continuously defend their practices and approaches in the light of a social science which, although subject to recent change, still seems to me firmly based on a quantitative platform in which tables and diagrams are more valued than illustrations and photographs (Ball and Smith 1992:11), and which demands clear subtitling or otherwise verbal description anchoring such pictures in a context of verbal discourse if they are to have any practical application (see notably Chaplin's discussion of Victor Burgin's *Between*, 1994:104–111). I want to suggest here that visual sociology faces two distinct types of criticism, one pertaining to the use of visual imagery per se, and the other relating to its exploitation of qualitative rather than, or as well as, quantitative research methods, with few notable exceptions such as Ziller (1990) which are more explicitly based on statistics. On occasion pressures to address or eliminate such criticisms lead to strange methodological decisions. For example, Wagner warns the visual sociologist who intends to use photographs as interview prompts in the research project to use multiple photographers, since the use of a single photographer might lead to 'visual bias'. Wagner claims, while discussing an example from his own impressive range of projects, that in this way:

> "...we were able to sort out personal visual styles of composition, lighting, and so on from the visual dimensions of the community itself." (Wagner 1979a:149)

I would argue that the use of more than one photographer does not lead to elimination of 'visual bias', but rather in more representations of equally biased perception, since I cannot envisage the possibility of unbiased perception in the sense that Helmholtz and Akeret could. Rather, if more than one photographer is engaged in taking photographs (such as in the example provided by Wagner), there might well be more of the same 'bias' at work. It is therefore much more relevant, I argue, that the photographers are being identified, that is, that social and professional background is provided, and the study from which Wagner draws his example fails to do that (Wagner 1979b). The reader might expect that two professional photographers may have been paid to take the photographs used in the consecutive interviews, in which case a very particular collective vision was likely to be shared between the two photographers, namely a kind of æstheticised vision instilled in most professional photographers through their education (Rosenblum 1978), and qualities relevant to such vision would undoubtedly surface in the photographs taken (Morris 1988 and Garrett 1988). In other words, there are no visual dimensions to a community other than the ones represented by persons who see things in socially particular and different ways. Whereas Wagner's aim was to secure a methodology free of visual bias, what resulted is a weakness in methodological description and the potential danger of the presence of unrecognised expression of a collective vision into the bargain. This is an example of how method is affected by assumptions, hypotheses and context. We could always argue that this is methodological nitpicking, since we could say that a photograph of a particular building shows that building, which seems a solid enough basis on which to proceed with an interview which asks questions about that building. My response would be entirely Arnheim's:

> "Faithfulness and realism are terms to be used with caution because a bona fide likeness may fail to present the beholder with the essential features of the object represented." (Arnheim 1970:140)

In other words, it is to potentially underestimate precisely how socially particular vision is.

Pictures as data

As Davies et al. (1990) comment, there is a 'return of the picture' quite generally, which has only recently become the topic of study in its own right. Stephen Jay Gould put it in perspective for us thus:

> "Our recent invention of speech cannot entirely bury an earlier heritage. Primates are visual animals par excellence, and the iconography of persuasion strikes even closer than words to the core of our being. Every demagogue, every humorist, every advertising excecutive, has known and exploited the evocative power of a well-chosen picture." (Gould 1991:28)

As a result of such proliferation of pictorial information, we suffer, so Davies et al. claim, from an *embarras de richesse* (1990:2), which may in part account for the difficulty in providing a clear method for a study based on pictures. This has not been helped by a philosophical mood called disenchantment, which Slater (1995:221, but see also Jay 1993:211ff.) describes as a modernist perception of vision which reduces the knowable world to discrete, observable and measurable facts, which requires the kind of realist representations of objects used equally in current visual sociology. This modernist reductionism sparked off an occasionally obscene discrimination of vision and the eye itself (no doubt the source of the term disenchantment), most readily witnessed in Surrealist artistic expressions, and notably in the pornographic work of Georges Bataille whose work became the subject of the critical scrutiny of Barthes(1982) and Sontag (1982) for that reason (Bataille 1982). Slater outlines three distinct elements to what he calls trivial realism, namely representational realism, the idea that precise pictorial representations could be made, such as photographs; ontological realism, the idea that these pictorial modes, photography in particular, had a physical relationship with objects located in nature; and finally mechanical realism, the idea that such representations equate with knowledge. A certain disenchantment with such ideas, coupled with a crisis in the project of sociology (itself centering around quantitative/qualitative issues) might explain the absence of photographs in sociological articles uncovered by Stasz (1979). Examples of such 'trivial realism' in the uses of photographs can be found not only in sociology but also in anthropology, which used photographs as anthropometric records (Spencer 1994), often showing people beside rulers or other scaling devices. However, it is important to discriminate between such early uses of photographs and the kind of 'trivial' science they representedon the one hand, and more recent developments in visual sociology and anthropology on the other:

> "The subtle shift that took place when we expanded on the role of photography in anthropology and archeology, from the use of a photograph of an arrowhead or a potsherd as evidence of existence to the use of a photograph of people as evidence of human behavior, is a particularly important and underexamined aspect of the history of social science." (Worth and Gross 1981:189)

It seems that the shift to late modernity in science coincides with the shift described by Worth for anthropology, but happening throughout the social sciences (for visual sociology, see comments made by Harper, 1994:403–411). What has thus occurred is a late-modern shift which changed our very concepts and understanding of science and resulted in different ways of doing science, as well as a shift in our use of photographic records as data in such science based on both the rejection of the Cartesian model of perception and on such reinterpretations of visual perception as forwarded by Lacan and Barthes. The latter proposes to understand photography as an æsthetic or socially defined, civilised code of perfect illusion, the former as a psychoanalytical confronting of subjective realities informed by the gaze. But as Iversen proposes, the two interpretations of the viewing of photographs are really two sides of the same coin, a problematisation of the act of observation itself:

> "What both Lacan and Barthes wish to express is the chiasm of vision: I may see objects, but I am also enveloped by a light or gaze which unsettles the position I want to occupy as source of the coordinates of sight." (Iversen 1994:461)

Iversen's discussion therefore suggests that there can be no rigid separation of the two interpretations. I see the visuality I am studying in relation to Deaf people as individually differing expressions of a collective visuality with a number of common elements based on shared social experience. The photographs are both perfect analogons of reality depicted in an optically lawful perspective in extradordinary rich detail, and subjective expressions of—in themselves—often wholly unremarkable events.

The question of the role of æsthetics is to a large extent a non-existent one, even apart from the idea that the distinction between science and art is often portrayed as an all too rigid separation between domains of knowledge, to the detriment of both (Elgin and Goodman 1989). To all designers (and here I can speak as one) it is clear that all made objects are the result of design, and whether that design is the result of a conscious, recognisable activity or of mere accident becomes a discussion centering entirely on notions of quality which are not pertinent to this study. In the case of a photographic æsthetic, I disagree therefore with Ball and Smith, when they write that:

> "Although documentary is wedded to the notion of photography as reportage, even its most enthusiastic proponents recognise its æsthetic dimension: choices have to be made about pose, light, composition, lenses, filters, type of film, shutter speed, and so forth." (Ball and Smith 1992:17–18)

This is to enter into an entirely spurious quest for difference. It is simply not possible to load a camera without making a choice of film, and it is equally not possible to point a camera without making choices about composition. To claim, as Beloff correctly does, that documentaries exploit certain qualities of black and white film for 'effect' (Beloff 1985:94, 95) does not therefore mean that the use of colour film is somehow disengaged from æsthetics, or constitutes some kind of neutral or objective choice by default. Similarly, to the extent to which additional light is not simply a practical requirement in order to be able to take photographs, to use any particular type of lighting (or indeed to avoid using any) is in no way to suggest that any one choice of lighting is more or less 'æsthetic' than another: there is no stylistically unbiased light for sale in even the most professional shop. Finally, choosing to use a popular pocket camera is not, apart from it being a practical choice, to avoid making æsthetic choices pertaining to the use of lenses. It is rather that those choices have been made, consciously or otherwise, in the purchase of the camera. To use any camera other than a pocket camera does not automatically equate with a celebration of technical accomplishments (although occasionally it may do), any more than choosing to drive a car over riding a bicycle merely equates with a celebration of the internal combustion engine (although occasionally it may do). This 'technological fetishism' as Chaney (1993:85) calls it, can become a judgemental blanket term applied to any person seen to use such equipment while not in possession of a diploma by a recognised institution of photographic education. Similarly, to make a distinction between reportage and documentary on the basis of æsthetic merit is to create a false dichotomy which relegates documentary practice to the arts and invests reportage with undue freedom from æsthetic judgement whilst making unsustainable claims regarding its objectivity and suitability as scientific method.

The ethnographic element

Some of the issues listed above describe the contestation of values which have been appended to different representational modes (e.g. documentary/ reportage) as textual form. In introducing a series of articles on this topic (namely that of ethnography), Clifford remarks that the articles his text prefaces:

> "...see cultures as composed of seriously contested codes and representations; they assume that the poetic and the political are inseperable, that science is in, not above, historical and linguistic processes. They assume that academic and literary genres interpenetrate and that the writing of cultural descriptions is properly experimental and ethical. Their focus on text making and rhetoric serves to highlight the constructed, artificial nature of cultural accounts." (Clifford 1986:2)

This is science re-fashioned and drawn into culture itself, in which scientific accounts (and such is the status of this project) become, themselves, 'fictions', in the sense that they are "something made or fashioned" (ibid:6), and thus necessarily partial in nature. My contribution here is to draw visual representation into this debate, in part to clarify the role of language (and its representations) itself in scientific 'fictions', and in part to draw attention to the idea that the universality of visual perception, the basis for much science, needs questioning. To claim that:

> "In a discursive [i.e. ethnographic] rather than a visualist paradigm, the dominant metaphors for ethnography shift away from the observing eye and toward expressive speech (and gesture)." (Clifford 1986:12)

may therefore be to misconstrue the debate that should be taking place, since it focuses on textual representation at the cost of ignoring other representational codes, and focuses on linguistic data at the cost of other sources. In other words, it limits ethnography to representations through *language*.

Contrary to Derrida's statement that the point of discourse is not how to make a better representation, but how to avoid representation (Tyler, 1986:128), the approach taken here is to study representation itself as an informative practice and form of expression. Considering that language itself is representation, it is hard to see how discourse could avoid it altogether. The point, rather, is to analyse forms of representation which are genuinely representative, that is, explain their representational status and give a 'voice' to those represented. I have tried to include that 'voice' in the auto-photography project described in chapter 6, as well offering my own 'voice' in chapter 5 in the same representational format, that of the photograph. Chapter 7 than adds the (discursive) 'voice' of the media through my critique of magazines aimed at Deaf audiences. Together these three approaches address the call for the kind of 'polyphony' demanded by a post-modern ethnography (Tyler 1986).

Qualitative and quantitative data

From my perspective, this study has been entirely exploratory from the start. There has been no clear-cut path through to a discussion of social phenomena in relation to the visual perception of Deaf people, no matter how obvious such perception may be to Deaf people themselves and to commentators in the sociology of deafness and sign linguistics. The way in which material has been organised in this volume bears no relation to the stumbling forwards and sliding backwards that I went through in the research process, and neither will it reflect the times that I decided to change focus, or follow a different lead that seemed more lucrative. Finally, nowhere along the route has it been precisely clear to me where observation became judgement, or where theory ran ahead of findings. In the process I have experienced first-hand, enquired and examined sources continuously as my conscience, common sense or someone else's comments demanded. Although this is typical of exploratory research (May 1993, Neuman 1994, Wolcott 1994), I decided when it became time to put my fingers to the keyboard that a rigorous re-organisation would not only provide a clearer structure than a diachronic one, but would also help to bring out arguments I had not properly considered or even been able to imagine before. Laurel Richardson has described this as writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson 1994). This may have also allowed me to hide weaknesses and dead ends, but then I cannot envisage research without them, and like other students, I want to concentrate on strengths.

The focus in this study has been largely the result of a qualitative method. I do not wish, nor am I able, to label myself with a term describing any one kind of research approach. In part this has to do with my own background. I have not been going through the most obvious channels in developing sociological skills, rather I trained as an applied artist. This is probably a direct comment on the increasing overlap between types of sociology and the arts, as commented on for example by Harper (1994) and most notably Chaplin (1994), who discusses the increasing overlap in areas such as visual representation, lay-out and presentation and even type-design. However, in one part of the study (chapter 6), I have exploited the powers of quantitative research through the statistical analysis of content. I am aware of the potential of 'reductionism', that is, reducing the particular and individual to significant instances of the general, as well as to the idea that I might have caused the data to 'behavioralise' in some ways (Ball and Smith 1990:27). Finally, in decontextualising the imagery through tabling I might have lost real phenomena which exist, as it were, between the photographs rather than in any particular one. Nevertheless, the benefit of quantitative analysis in an exploratory study such as this one has been that I have been able to organise and analyse material that could not otherwise be compared to other such material, since there is none, and it therefore was the only way to subject it to rigorous, but conventional (and in that sense comparable) procedures of analysis which have been explicitly formulated for such purposes. The statistics used here were, so to speak, the 'widget' in a can of beer that would have poured just as well without it.

The local Deaf club

For the exploratory documentary I visited a local Deaf club, and followed ten volunteers around with my camera. The Deaf club is open to outsiders like myself only on Sunday evenings, and

I agreed which each of the ten people to photograph them during one such evening of their choice. At the start I had hoped that people would come forward on their own behalf, after I had specifically and publically (through an interpreter) explained my intentions and those of the study. The reason no-one did is probably to a large extent in the nature of 'volunteering', but undoubtedly also to do with both my hearing status and the fact that the objectives are difficult to spell out easily in the space of five or ten minutes. For most of the ten people who agreed to take part, it follows that they had been personally invited by myself. Others volunteered because they were urged to step forward by people I had previously photographed. The way such encouragement was framed was both in support of a hearing person doing his best, and because, so it was stated, being photographed had actually been experienced as being quite good fun.

I usually took over one hundred photographs on any one evening (i.e. per person), a total of well over one thousand photographs all together. While taking the photographs I have tried to concentrate on the person himself or herself, and on the environment in so far as the person seemed to pay particular attention to it. On only one occasion I photographed a person, Francis, outside the Deaf club. Francis carries responsibilites in relation to the Youth club, and when the whole Youth club went for parachute training, Francis invited me to come along to take photographs of his first-ever jump.

Both Francis' parents and two brothers are Deaf and frequent the same Deaf club. Since I had no idea of family relationships in the Deaf club, I did not know that I was about to photograph three members of the same family until I had already arranged to photograph Mrs. Murphy, Francis' mother, and Charles, Francis' brother. I decided not to change arrangements, since I could not conceive of how or where such relationship might influence the photographs as data, and also because I thought the family relationship might actually show something worthwhile in the photographs. In any case, all three were exceptionally interested and co-operative, which makes me think that maybe I or my work have (if only briefly) been discussed within the family.

After developing and printing up the photographs in my bathroom *cum* darkroom at home, I handed a full set back to each of the ten people as soon after processing as I could (on occasion belatedly due to a lack of financial resources), with the request to them to select the four photographs which they liked best, which I then printed up for them to keep on large size prints. One person out of the ten was unable to make this choice, and since he seemed reluctant to discuss the reasons with me, I did not enquire further.

The 'auto-photography' project

A financial windfall enabled me to buy ten pocket cameras, which were loaded with film and handed consecutively to a group of ten hearing pupils from a local secondary school and a group of ten Deaf pupils from a Deaf college, with the request to take photographs of a social event of their choice. In both cases, the request was provided during a visit to the schools by me (in spoken English for the hearing pupils and in BSL for the Deaf pupils). It is worth noting here that I am not fluent in BSL, and I therefore spent more time with the Deaf pupils in explaining what I wanted them to do, and I tried to make sure my signing had been fully understood by asking questions. In addition to this direct interaction, all twenty people received the request in written English. The ten Deaf pupils received in addition a form which asked questions about their circumstance of being Deaf, namely their language preference, BSL, Sign Supported English or spoken English, whether either or both of their parents are Deaf, and a rating of the extent to which signed communication between themselves and their parents takes place.

In the case of the pupils, they all received a full set of the photographs they had taken to keep. In addition, they received a numbered second set with an accompanying form which asked them to select what were in their opinion the four 'favourite' photographs they had taken, with the additional request to explain in written English, briefly, why. Although the written English skills of the Deaf people were of a different kind than those of the other pupils, I did not find that they were more limited in the expressions of their written responses. Although I was mainly interested in their visual expression through the photographs, I have used the written responses to guide my interpretations and attempts to value the selected photographs in relation to those that were not selected. Where I have done this, I will make explicit reference to the written commentaries themselves, quoting the students' exact words and language constructions.

Since the cameras were loaded with 24 frame-films, the originally planned project was expected to result in 480 photographs. I had chosen to send these films to a laboratory for both developing and printing, since I wanted all films to receive exactly the same treatment, which is hard to guarantee when working with the limited means I have at my disposal at home. For example, temperatures of baths are hard to control sharply, resulting in negatives strips of differing coverage (i.e. density and contrast). Unfortunately one of the sets, the photographs recorded by a Deaf pupil, was treated by the lab in colour rather than black and white process, and the negatives were lost. In addition, two Deaf pupils were apparently unable to choose their four 'favourite' photographs. Therefore the quantitative tables dealing with information obtained by content analysis of all four 'favourite' photographs show up a different total number of analysed photographs for the hearing pupils and the Deaf pupils respectively. This is of no consequence in the statistical calculations performed here.

Finally, although it proved possible to select five male and five female hearing participants, it was not possible to attain similar equal participation at the Deaf College, where instead six females and four males took part. Although this may have resulted in a slightly different focus (for example in relation to content), I believe that gender has not been an influencing variable in either the quantitative analysis or my interpretation. Since my concern is entirely with a Deaf visuality, I may however have overlooked, or indeed misconstrued, information concerning gender, and anyone willing to look through the photographs with an eye on this issue may well be able to uncover interesting additional information not discussed here. This same remark extends to information about ethnicity. Both are worthwhile investigative topics in their own right (including their relation to expressions of a Deaf visuality), but they are not a topic in this volume.

The choice of black and white photographs for both projects was based mainly on practical considerations. First of all, it would have been impossible to develop and print colour material in my own darkroom, and it would also have required a disproportionate outlay in terms of additional equipment. Aside from that, the final report could, equally for sheer financial reasons, only be printed in one colour. The choice of black and white therefore left colour completely out of the methodological equation: what you see on the pages is indeed how it was recorded. However, I am aware that in opting for black and white film I have created a certain 'mood'. Beloff remarks in relation to the use of black and white that it:

> "...has an austerity, an abstractness—even, it has been suggested, a literary quality—that means we take notice of it in a particular way." (Beloff 1985:77)

As with æsthetic quality, I do not scorn or deny the presence of such qualities—indeed, I do personally like black and white photography. But even the most dry, unimaginatively written scientific report has a literary quality, albeit a modest one. As with æsthetics, it is not possible to avoid the literary element of presentation, or to engage in a 'neutral' scientific address: depiction is like description in that description is never 'mere' description (Wolcott 1994:63).

There is also an issue with black and white photography in relation to disability imagery. Hevey suggests that black and white photography has become indicative in politically engaged disability circles of a process he terms 'victim-positioning' (Hevey 1992:80). This is shown by the fact that indeed much charity advertising is shot on black and white film. It aims to exploit the qualities described by Beloff, but also locates it within an otherwise politically 'left' framework of socially engaged, realist photography itself based on the overwhelmingly black and white photographs of the social documentary. Hevey provides the example of the work of Diane Arbus (Hevey 1992:57), who became known as the 'photographer of freaks'. Although Hevey recognises the economic pressures involved in minority representation, which he describes as the 'element of necessity', he feels that it is therefore important to subvert such image positioning processes by taking photographs in full colour. Clearly it would be easy for me to point out that Deaf people do not see themselves as being disabled, and that I operate here under the element of necessity— and both are entirely legitimate considerations here. But I acknowledge that there is indeed a popular element of association of black and white photography with the pitiful, the victimised, the powerless, and the poor, especially in the photographs I have taken—as an outsider and 'member' of the hearing, white, male, able-bodied, middleclass bourgeoisie—of Deaf people in the club. I can only urge that the photographs be viewed in the context of the study and the arguments presented—where I think the photographic presentation is 'safe'—and that I be held responsible for the photographs within this context, not for re-presentations of them outside it; it is within different interpretative frameworks that photographs invite different readings. The framework I present here is not a materialist or Marxist account which aims to uncover *power* relations, expose injustice or present Deaf people in any way through a discourse which invites vocabulary such as 'struggling', 'coping' or even 'demanding' or 'having rights'; I have clarified my political allegiance elsewhere in this study as part of methodological considerations. Neither is it a celebration of cultural difference by exhibiting the visually spectacular, even though I find some of the visual elements in this study 'spectacular'. The account within which the photographs appear is an interpretative and phenomenological exploration of the pertinence of visual perception to the social relations in which Deaf people are engaged, presented as a study in visual sociology. As part of the same academic custom in which an author cannot be held responsible for being quoted out of context, I do not wish to be held responsible for the photographs here presented being 'quoted' out of that context.

Photographs placed in magazines of/for Deaf people

This project into printed 'mass' media products aimed at a Deaf audience was originally envisaged as a main source of information on Deaf visuality. However, it quickly became clear to me that each of the three magazines I covered, namely *the British Deaf News* published by the British Deaf Association, *Soundbarrier* (now called *See Hear! Magazine*) published by The Royal National Institute of Deaf People and *Talk*, published by the National Deaf Childrens' Society had (rather obviously) very different editorial practices in place to deal with photographs and clearly different budgets available to them for photographs. There proved to be so many external variables interfering with the photographic expression as exemplified in these magazines that unless I had known what I was looking for—which I definitely did not—I would have been in grave danger of wasting a lot of time in order to get 'dirty' data, data which were subject to much interference. Instead I carried out a relatively straighforward categorical breakdown according to content matter of the photographs placed in all the issues in a single year (1992) of two of the three magazines. The relevant table is provided in the appendix (table 4), and in chapter 8 these two magazines will be discussed in relation to the two projects described earlier.

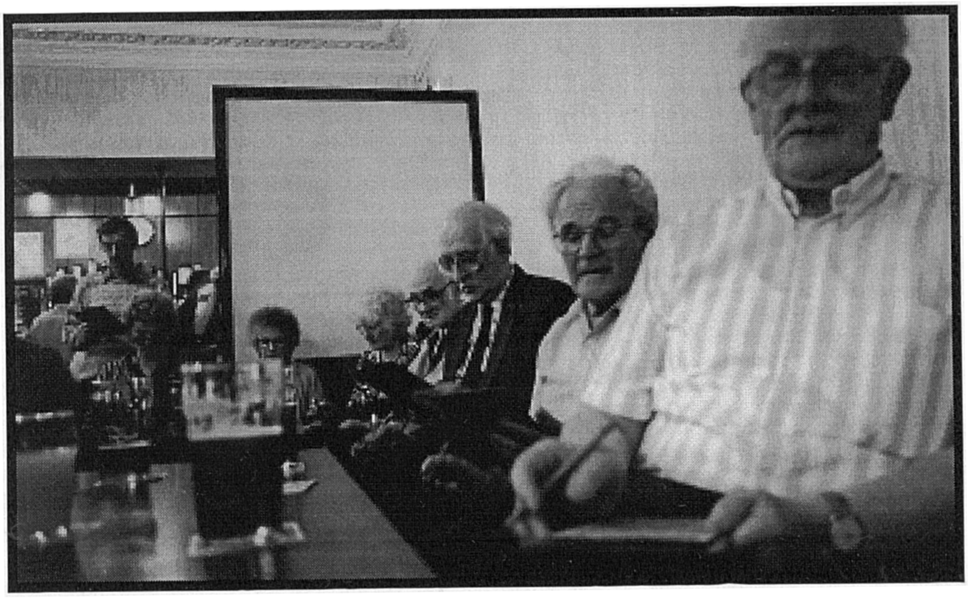
To conclude this discussion of method, I have attempted to include as many photographs 'as I could get away with', meaning that unfortunately the material form of a printed volume such as this places great (financial) value on space and equally so on the preparation and printing of photographs; therefore the ratio of pictures to text is without doubt the opposite of what would have been my preference.

5

The idea of scopic space: an exploration of Deaf club life in photographs

Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu.
—Nothing is in the intellect that was not in the senses first.
(Socrates)

1 Mr. Phillips



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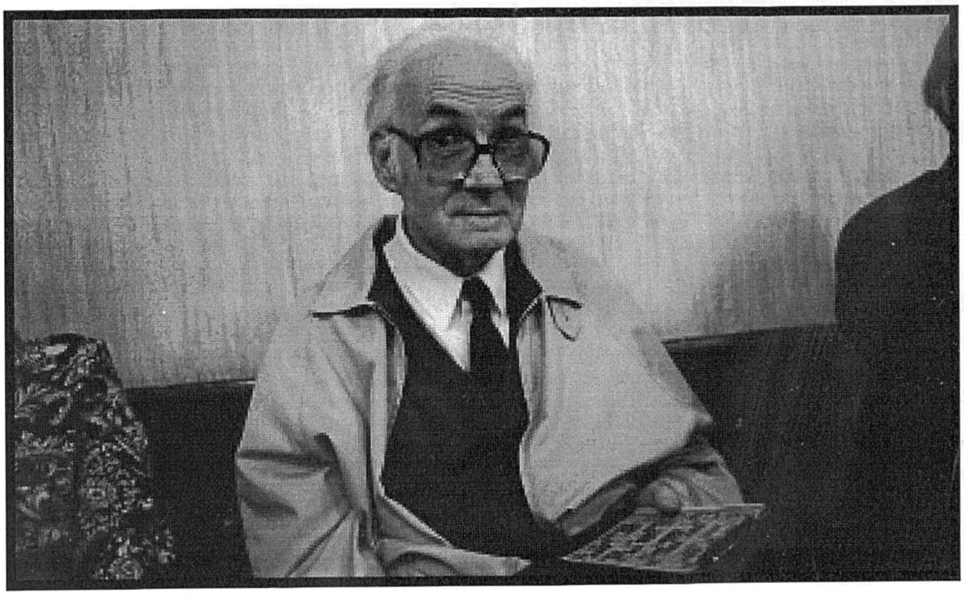

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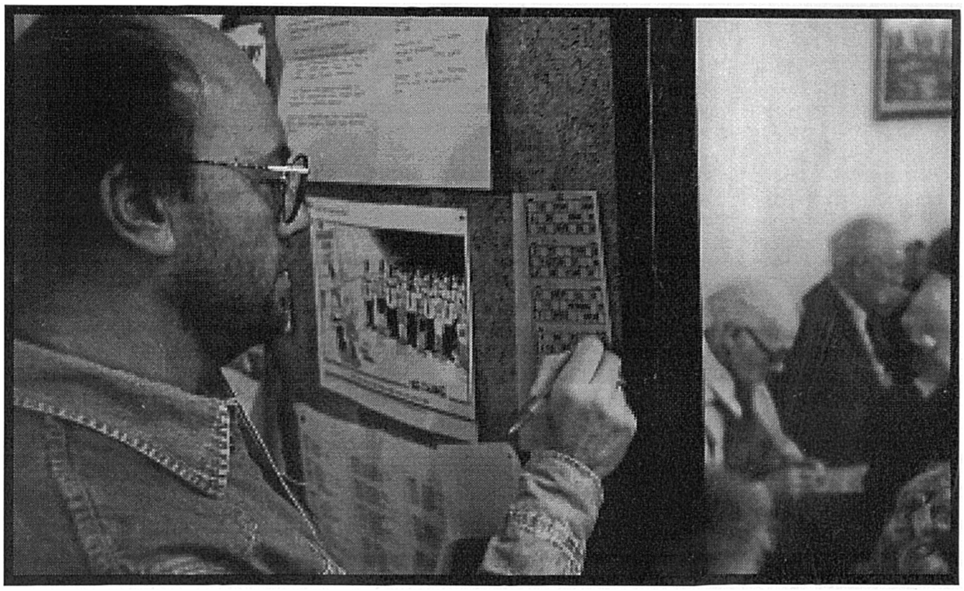
4 Mr. Phillips



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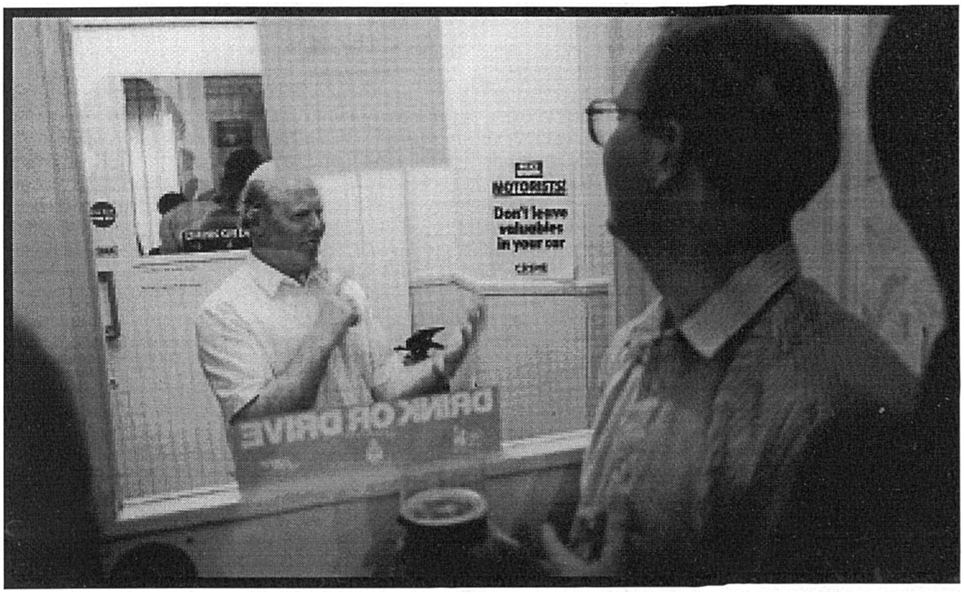

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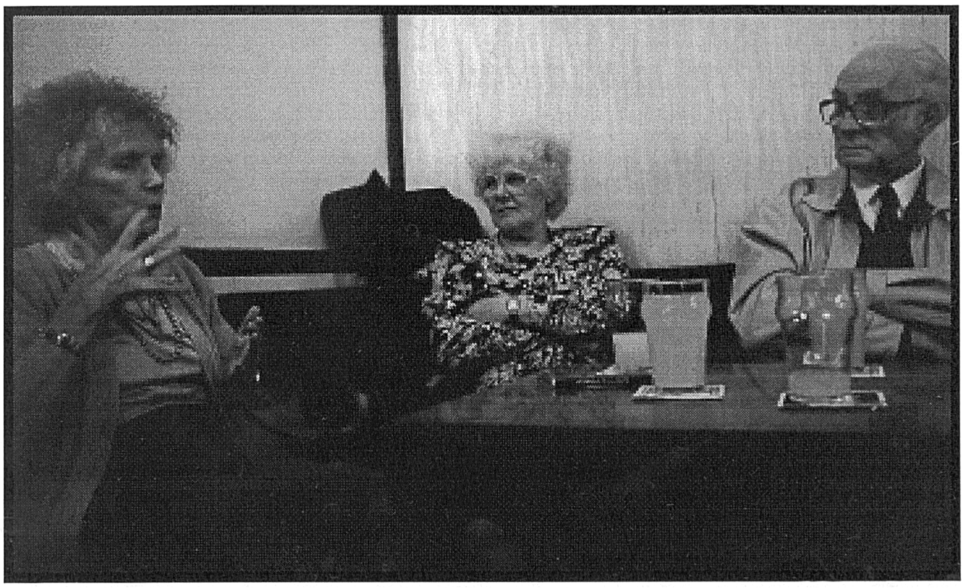
8 Mr. Phillips

9 Mr. Phillips



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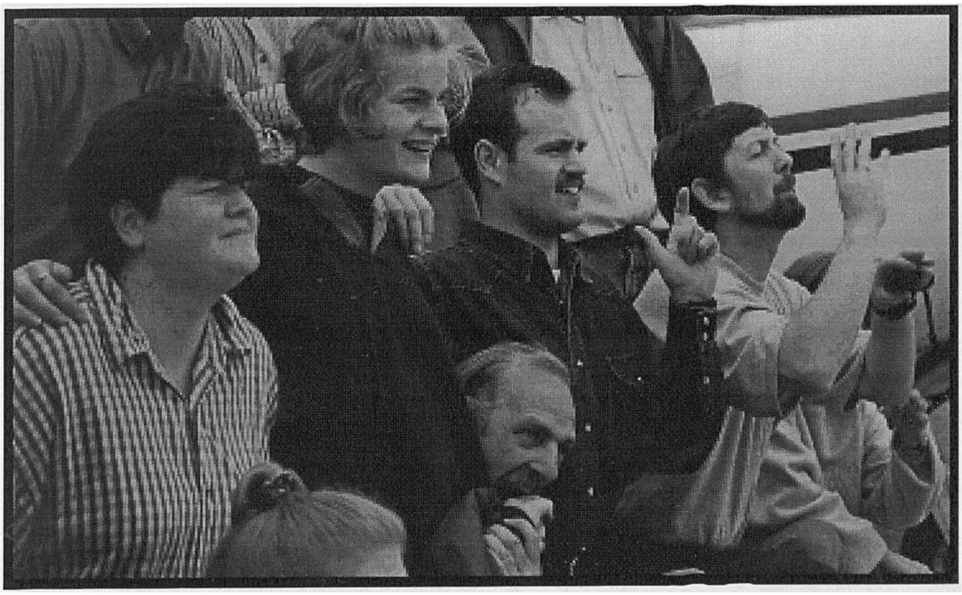
11 Mr. Phillips

12 Mr. Phillips

13 Mr. Phillips

14 Francis

15 Francis



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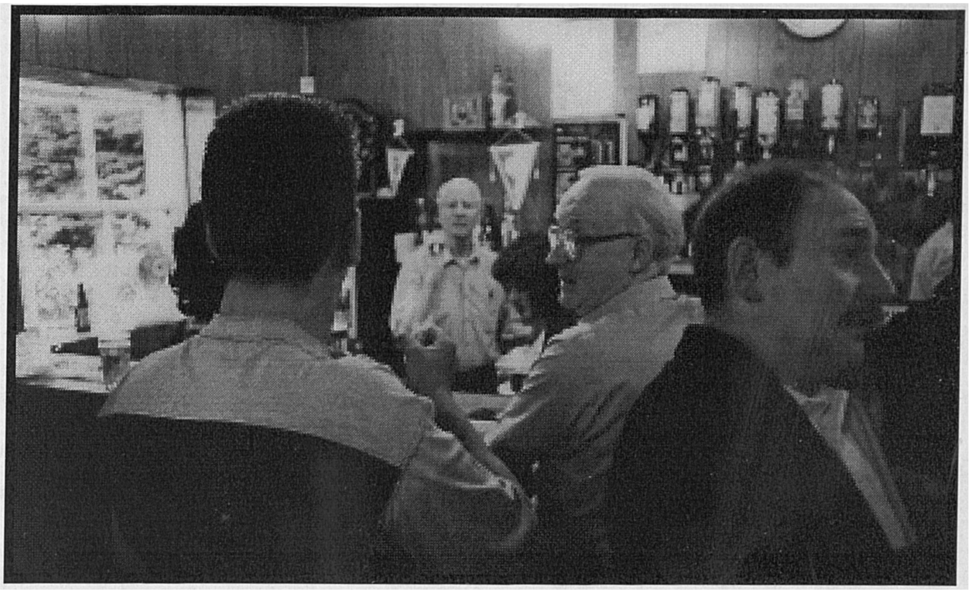

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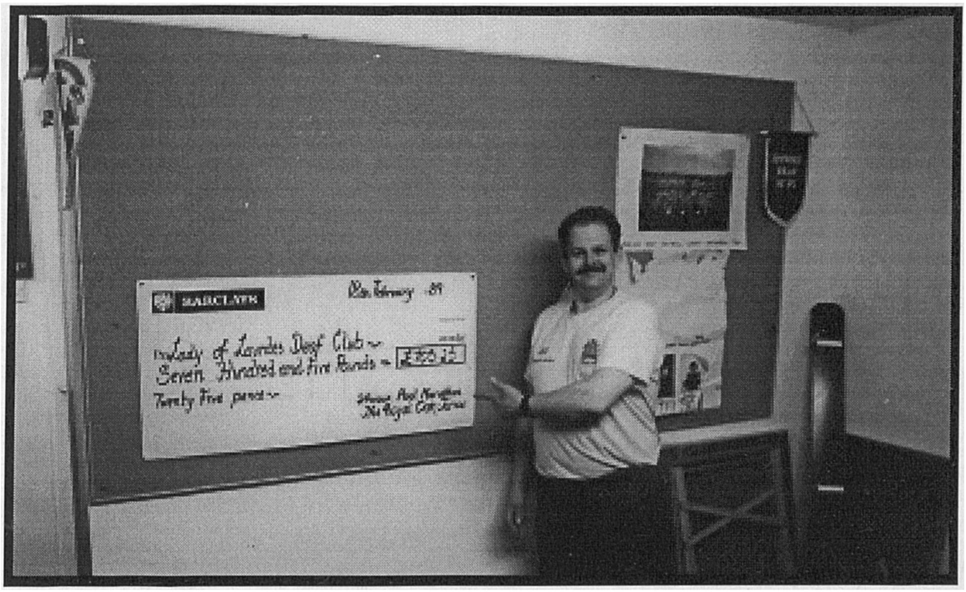

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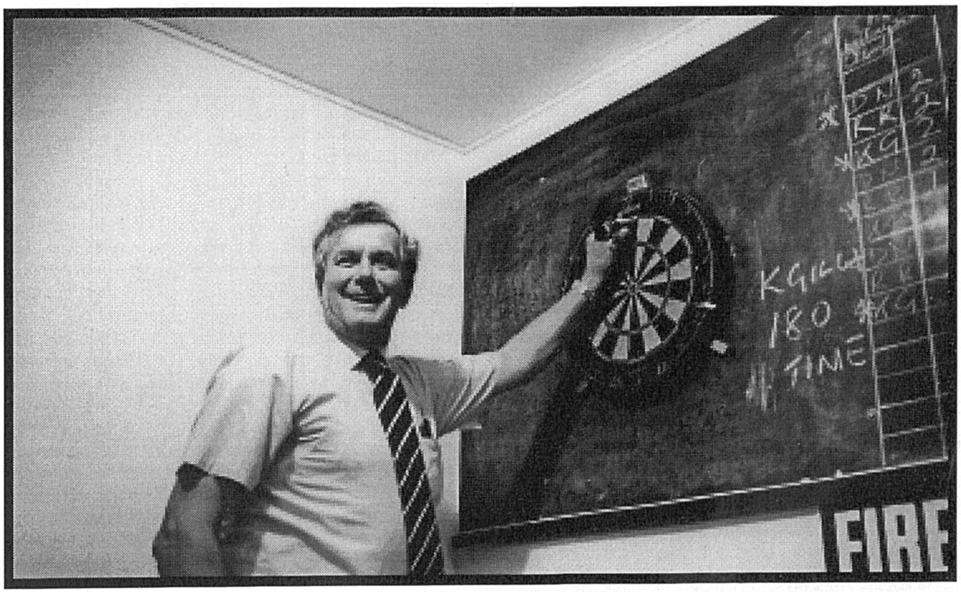

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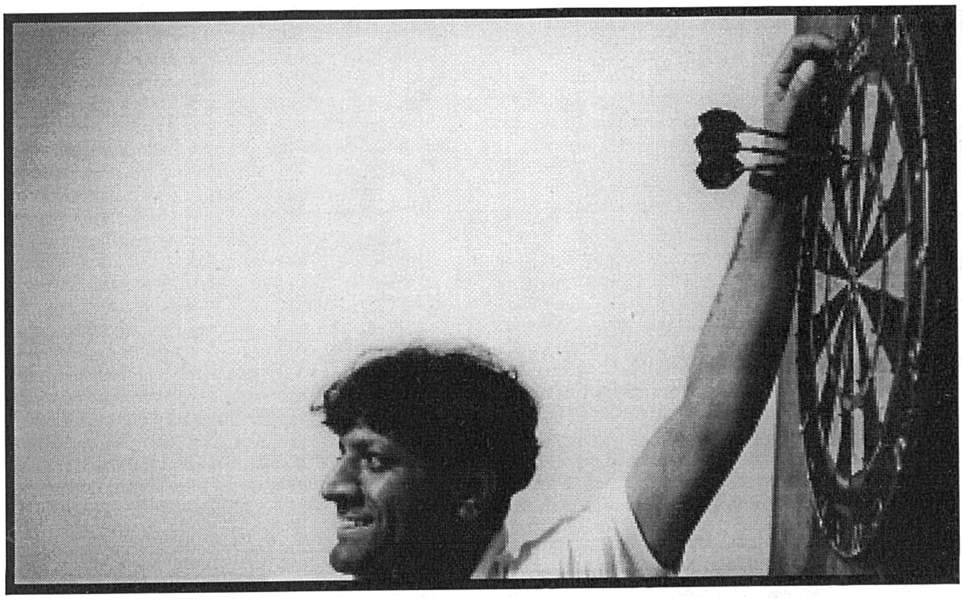

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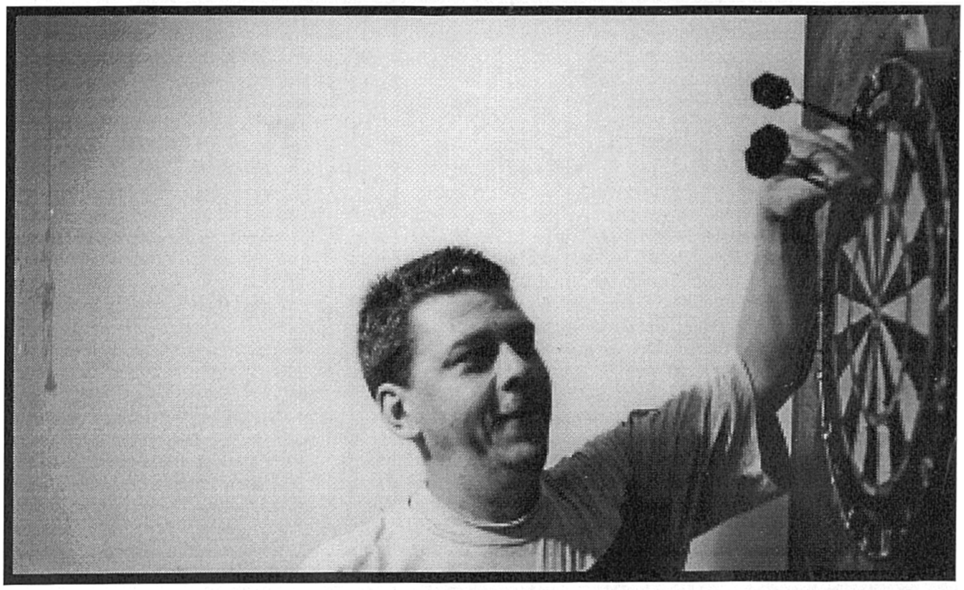

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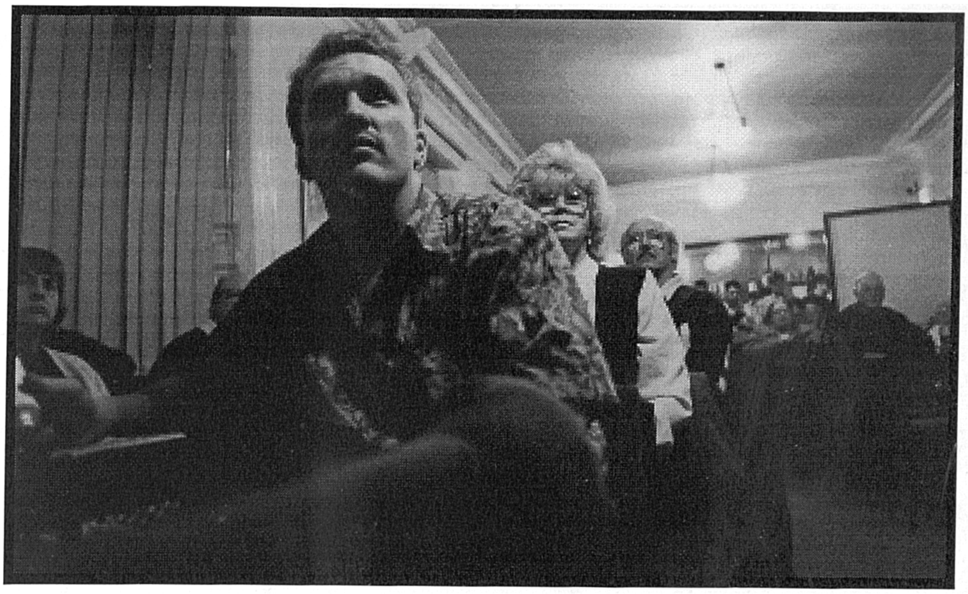

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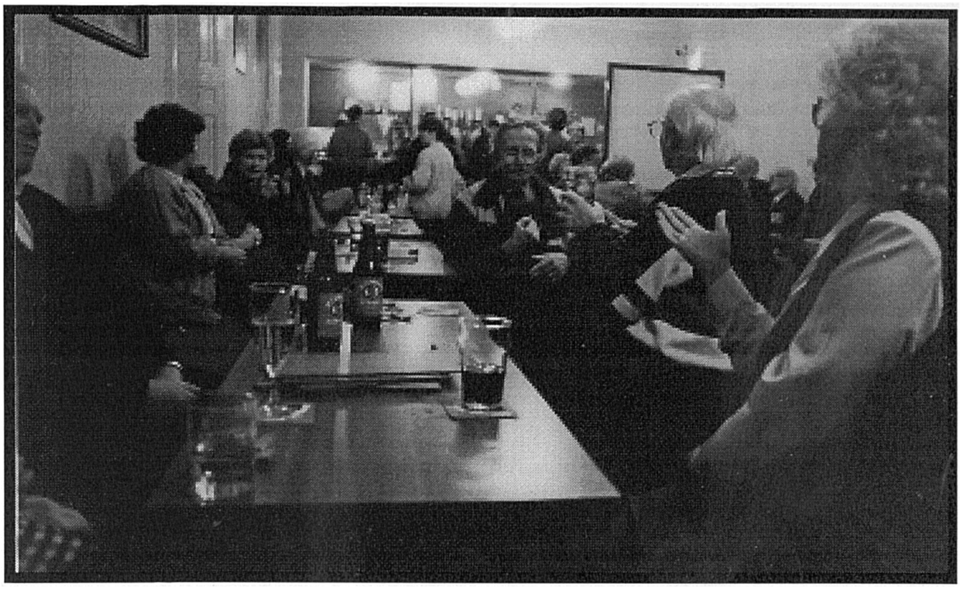

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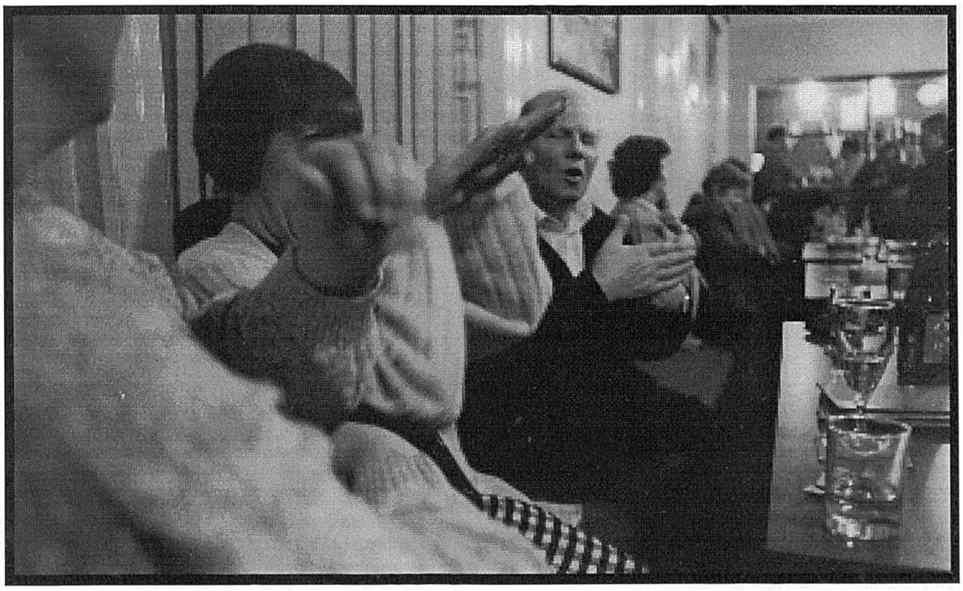

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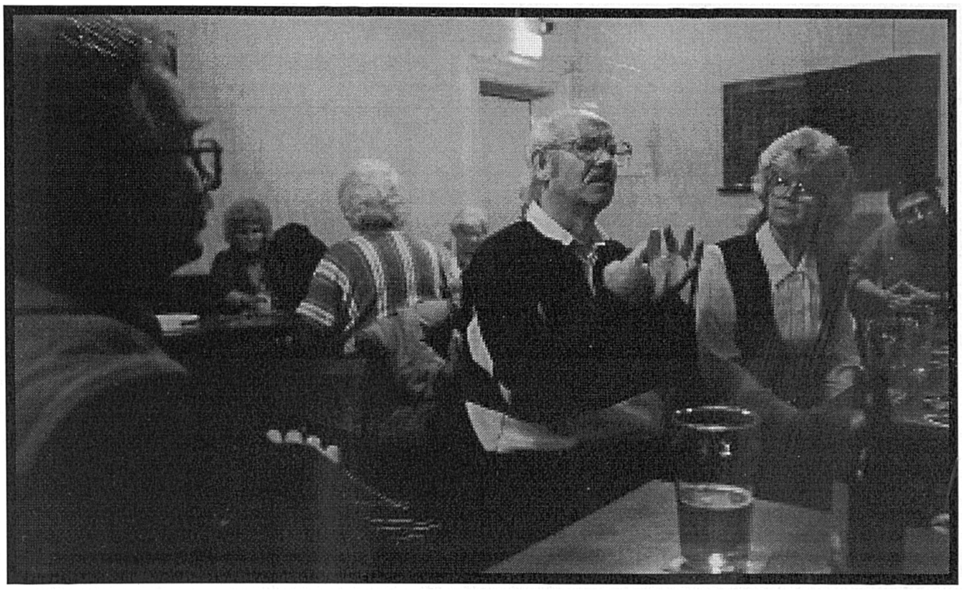

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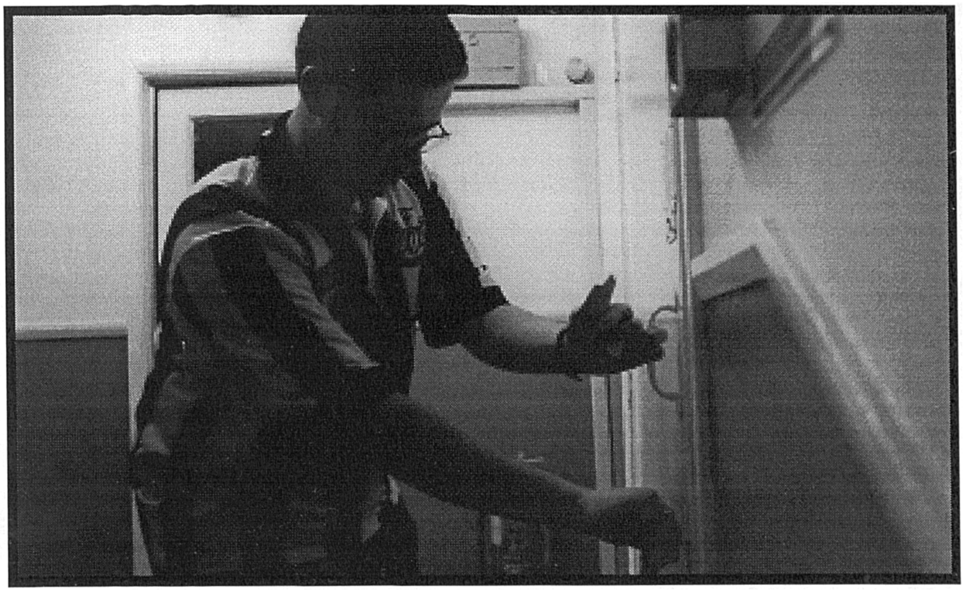

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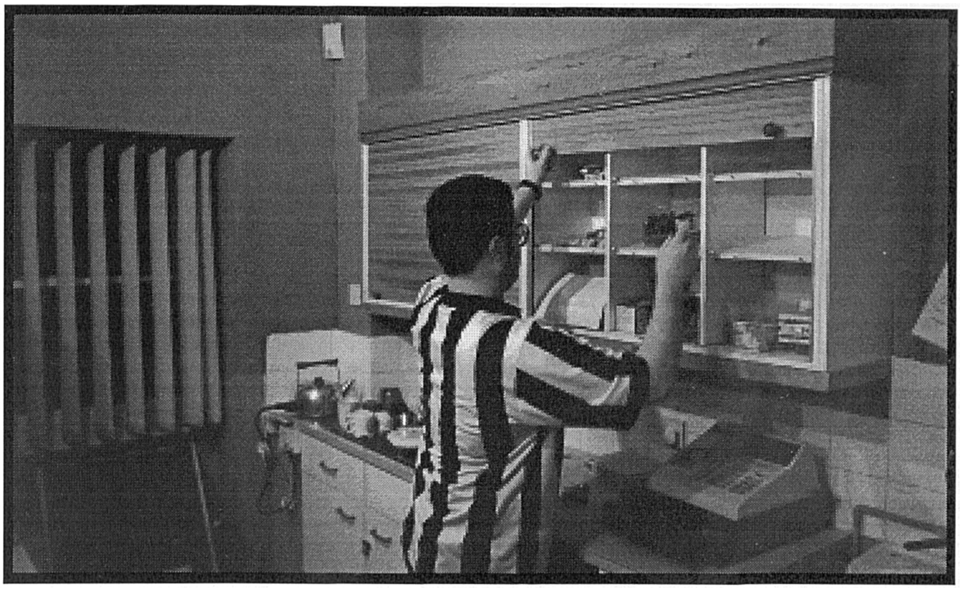

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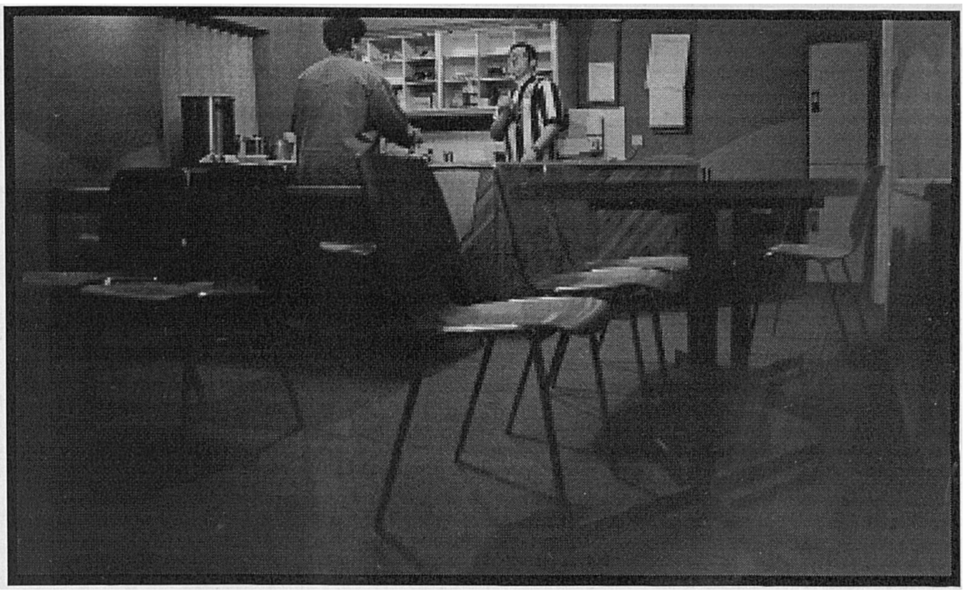

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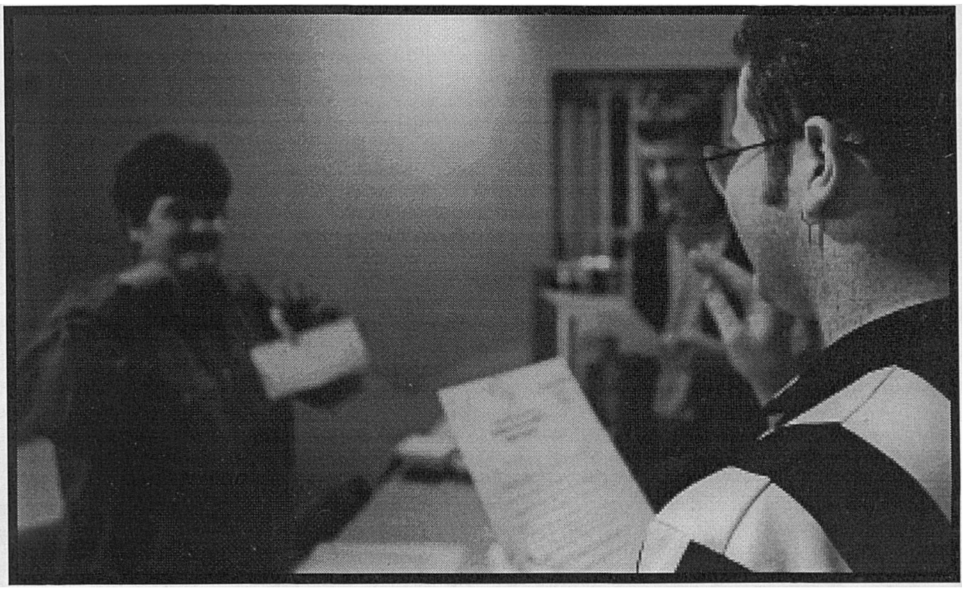

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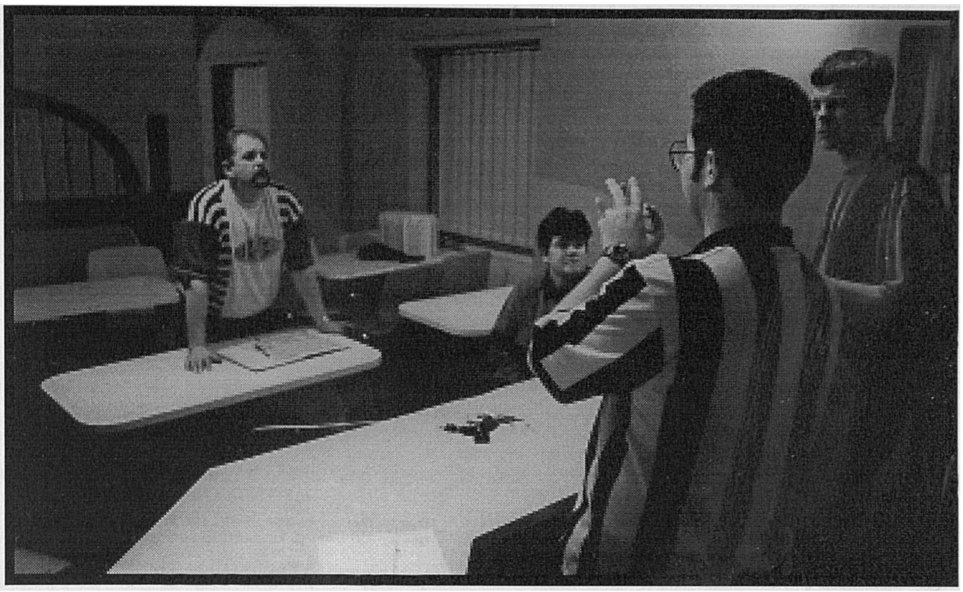

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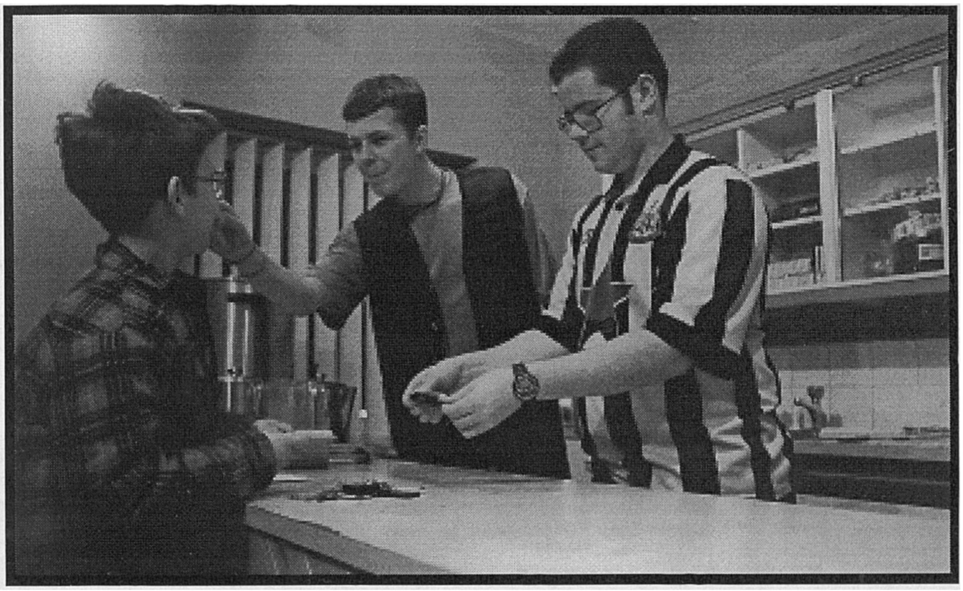

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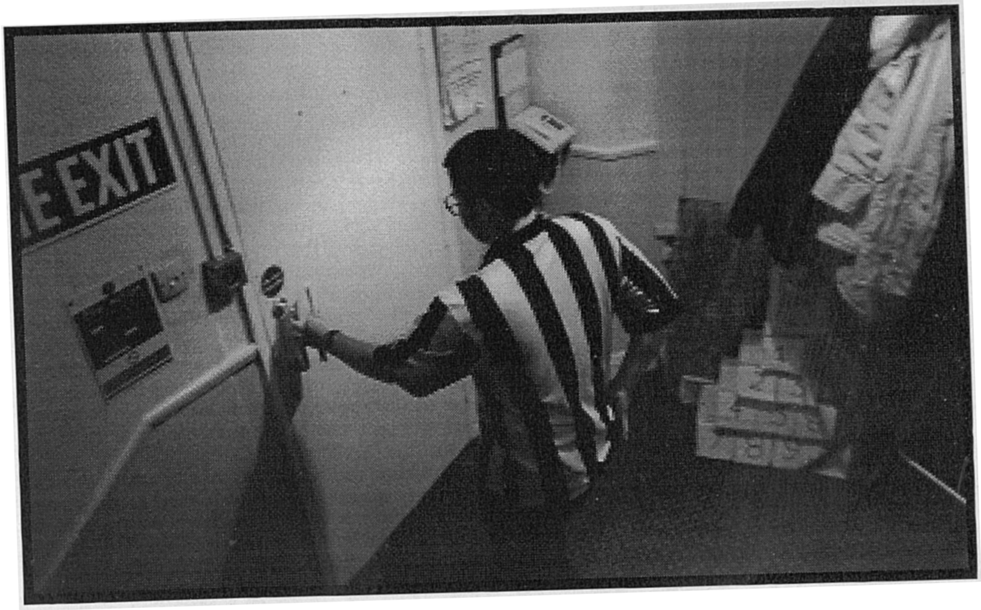

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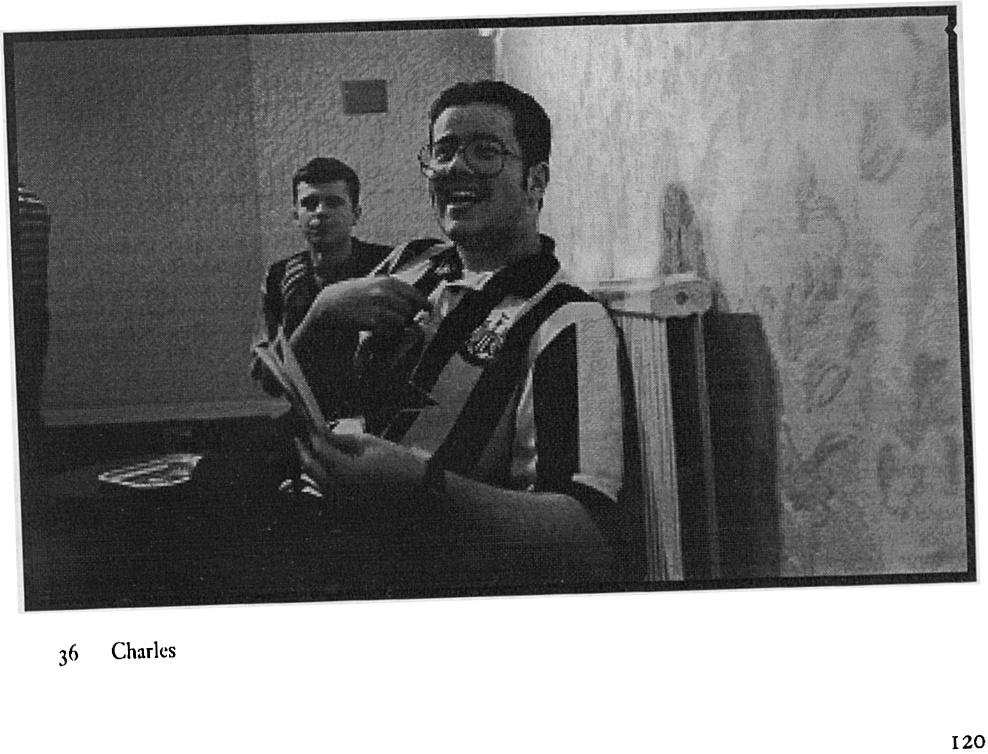

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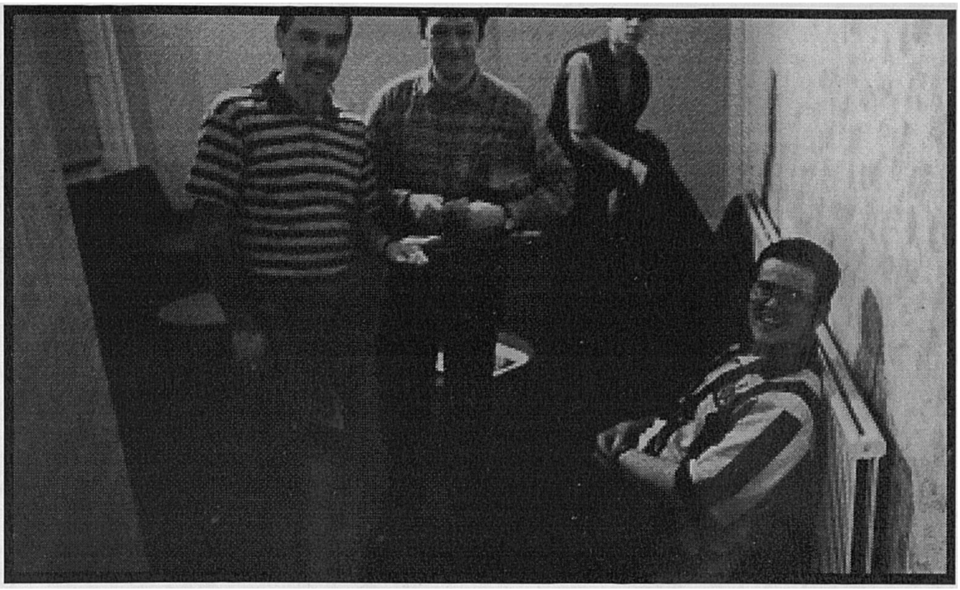

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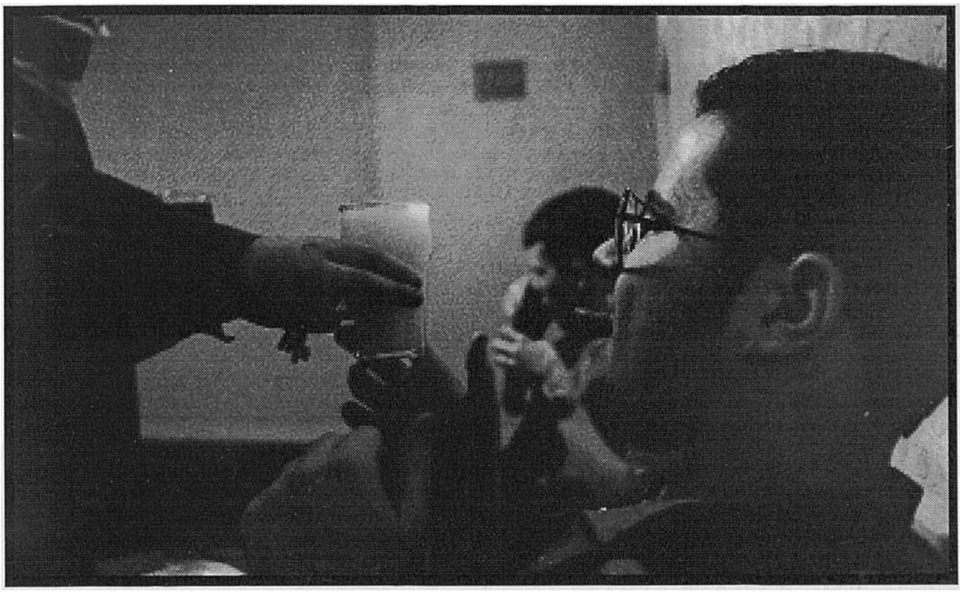

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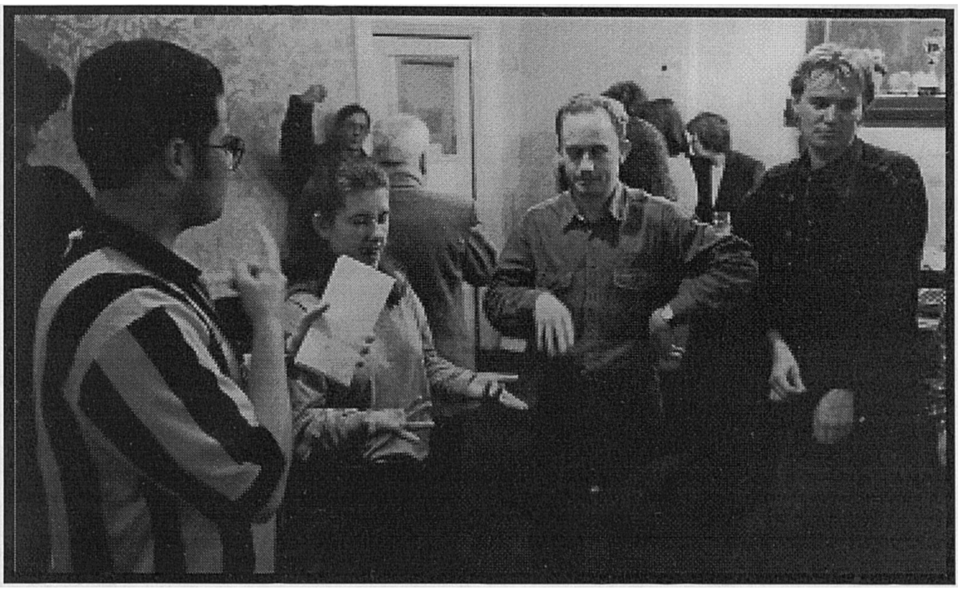

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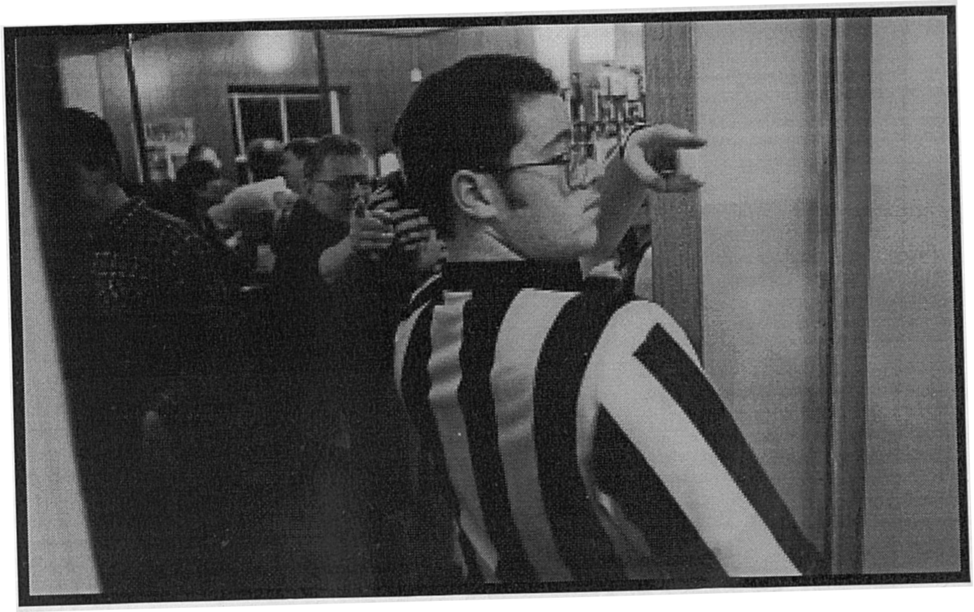

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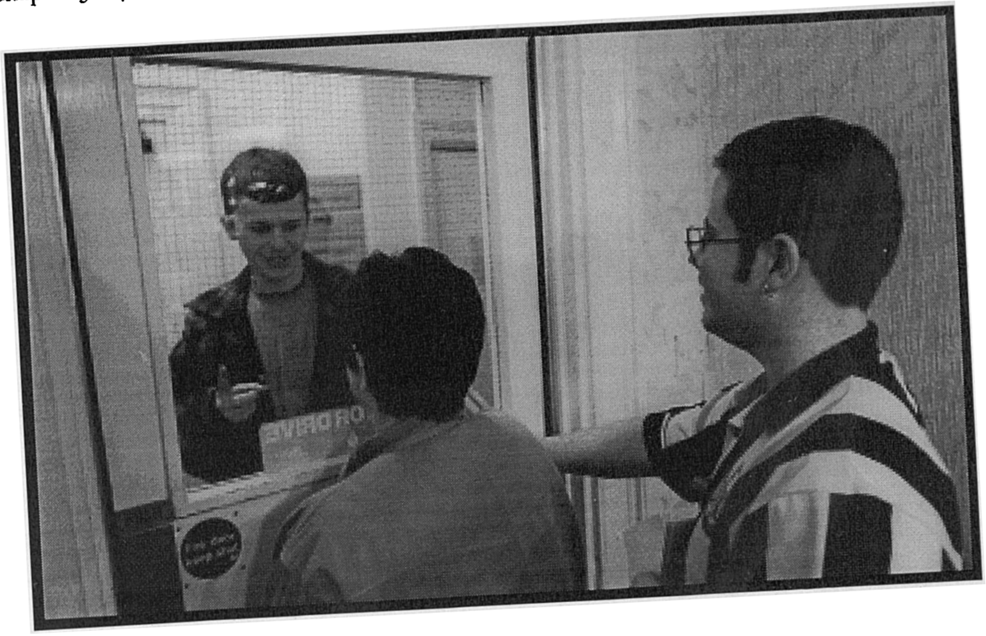

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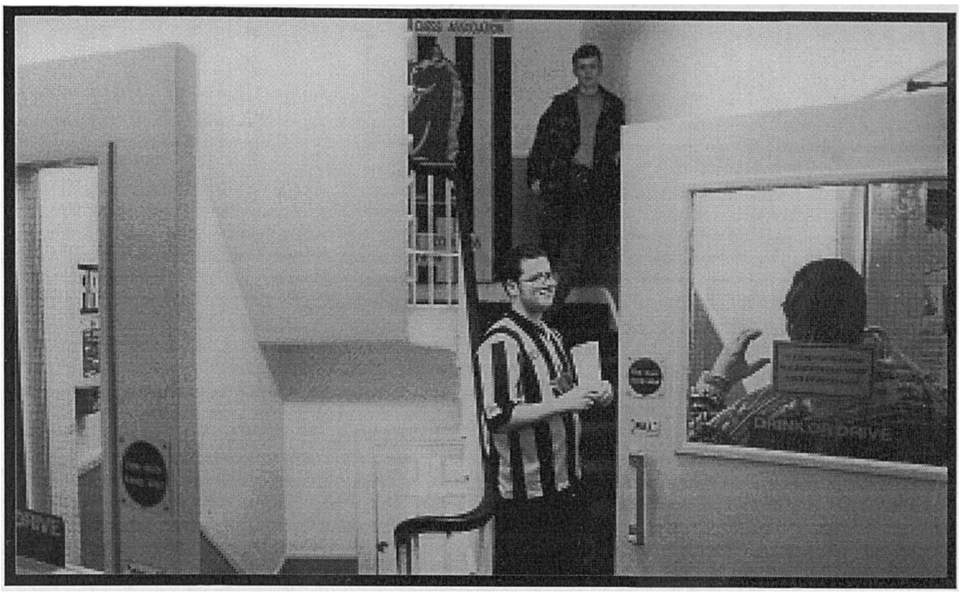

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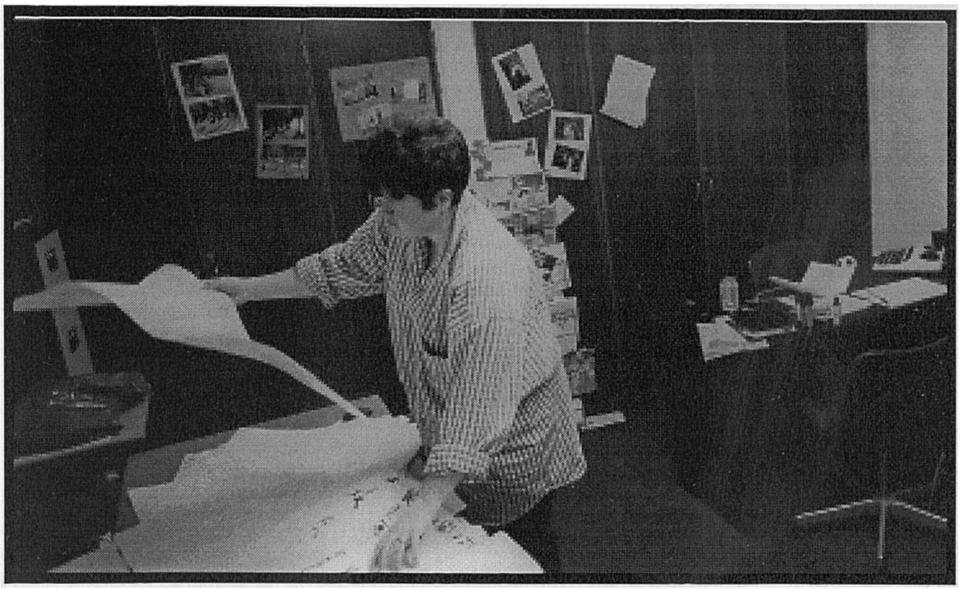

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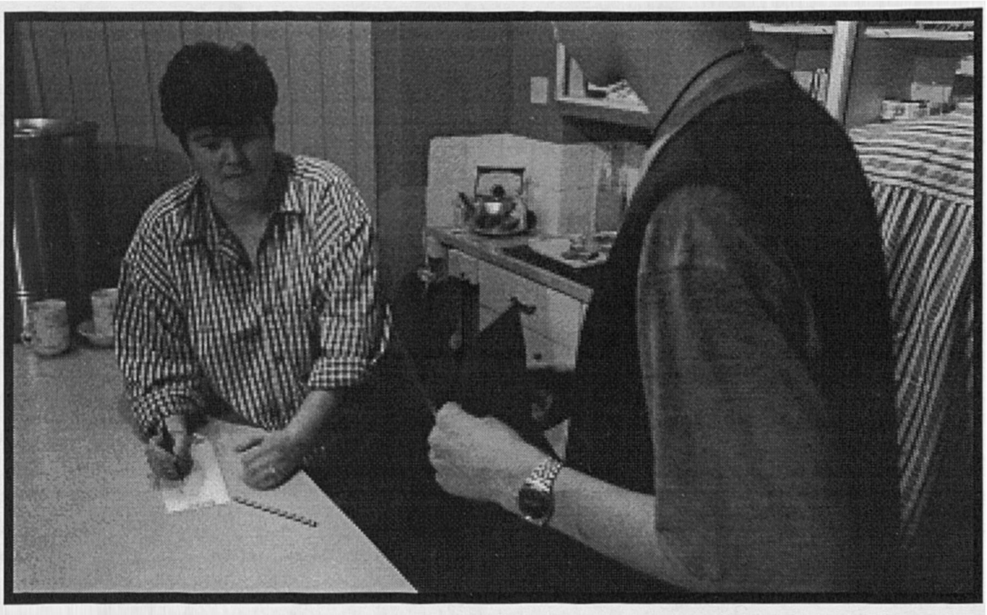

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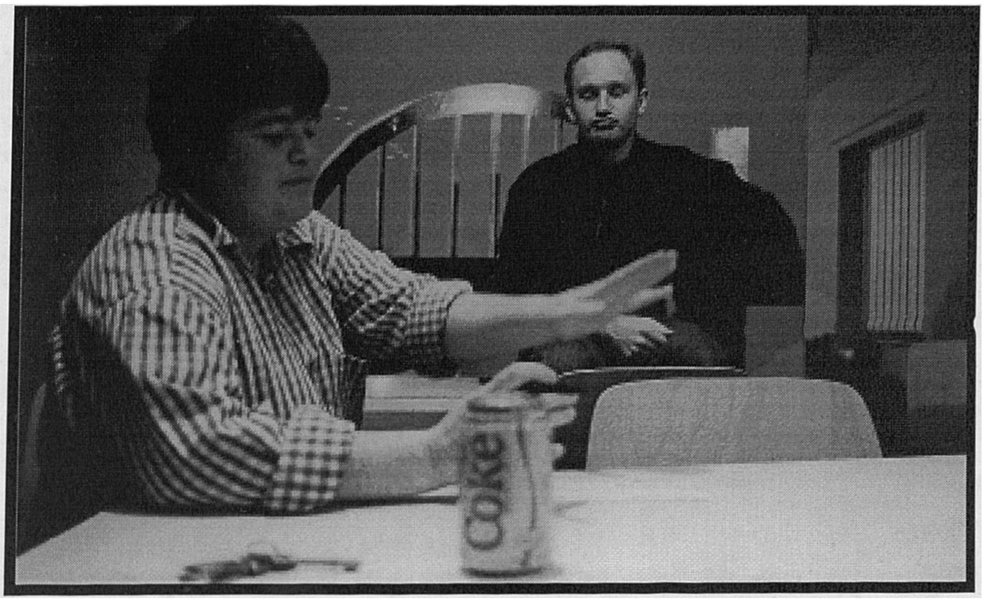

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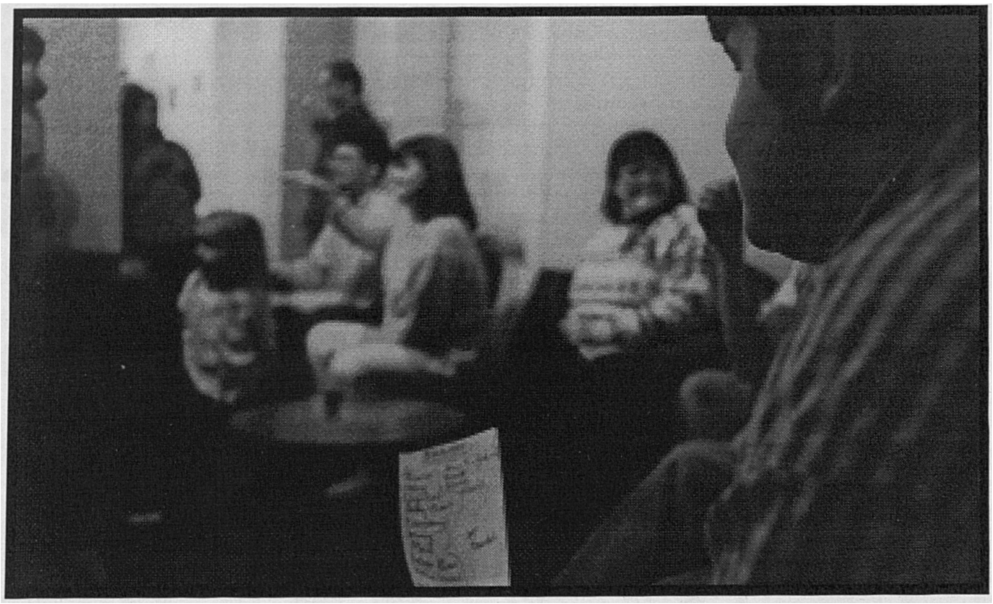

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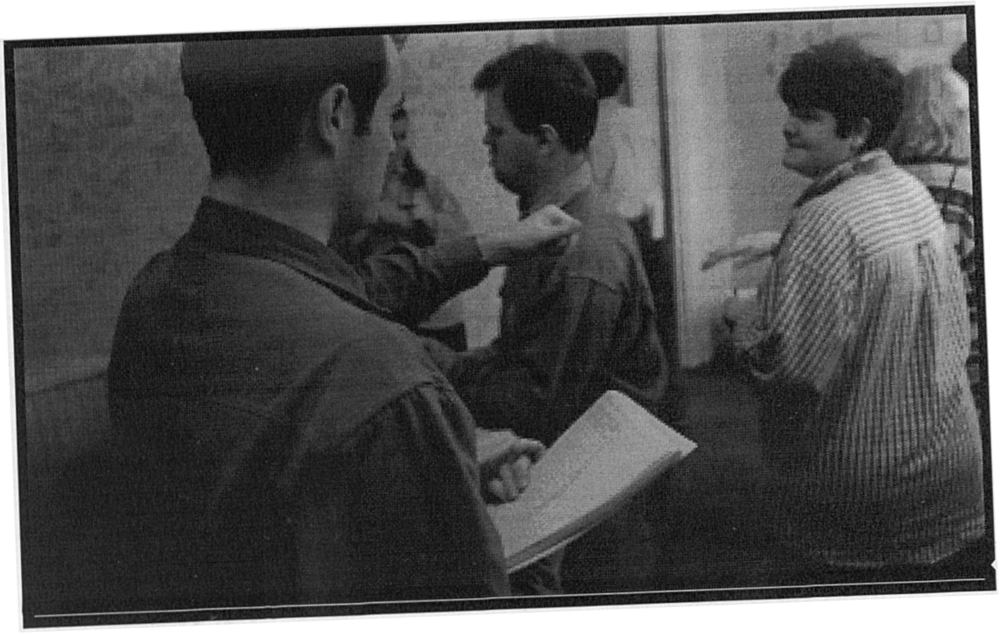

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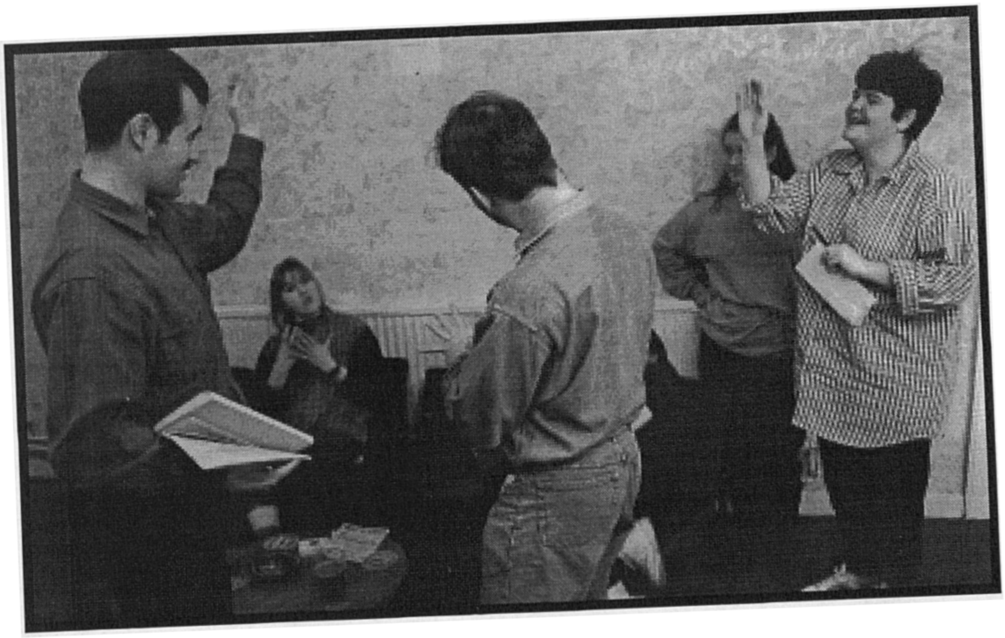

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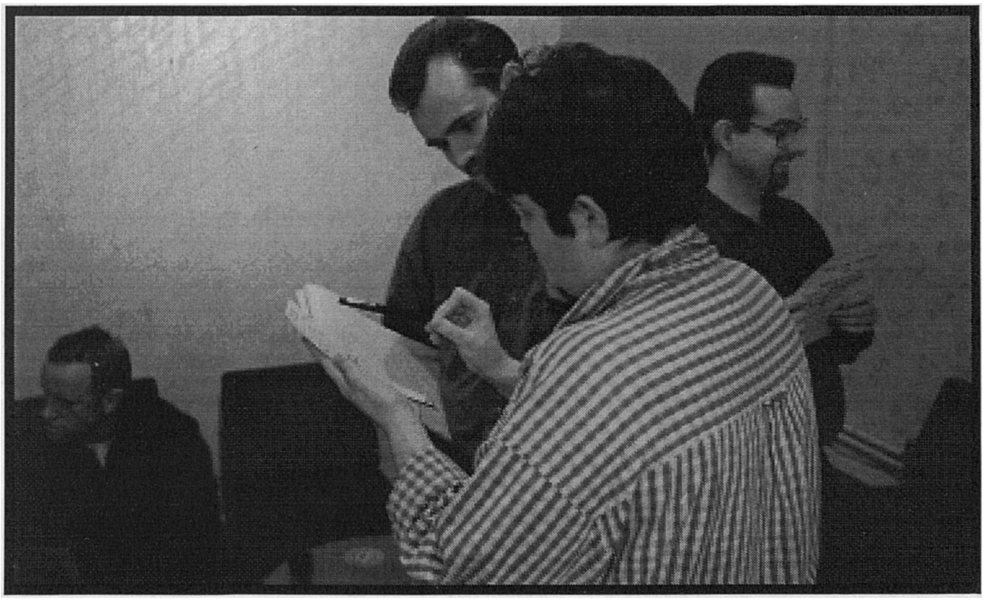

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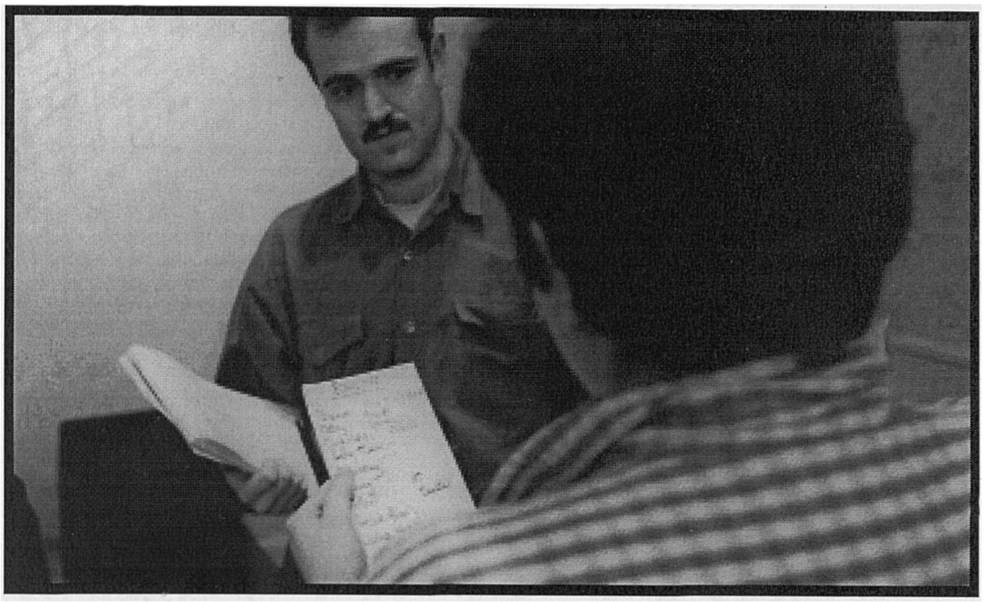

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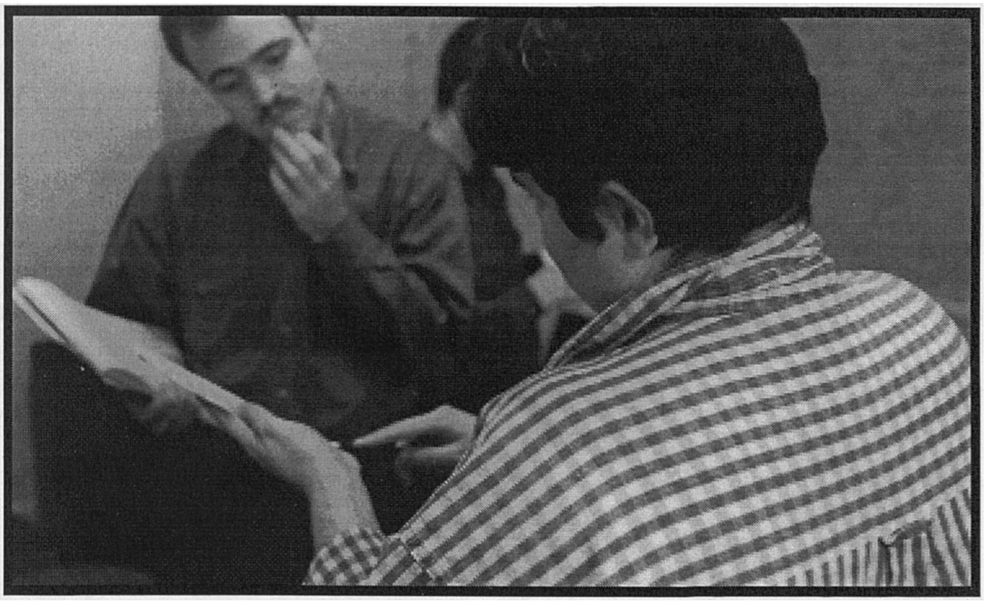

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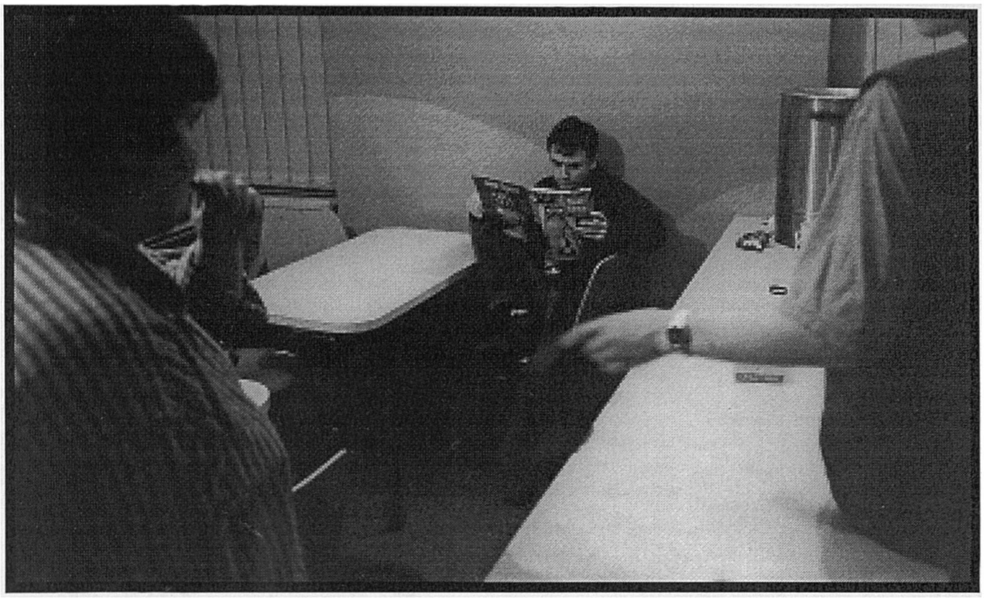

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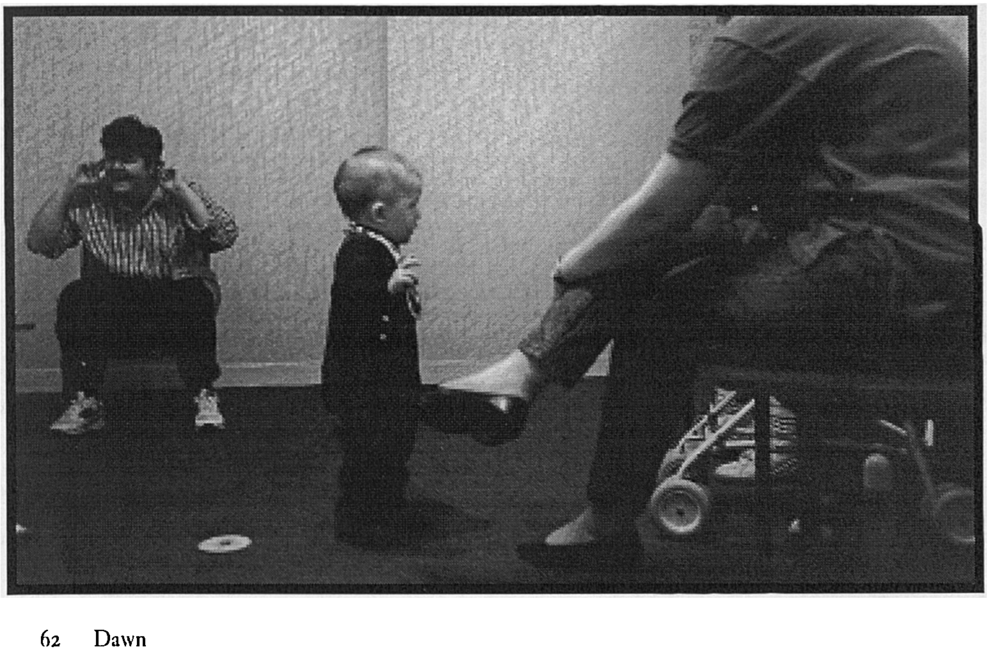

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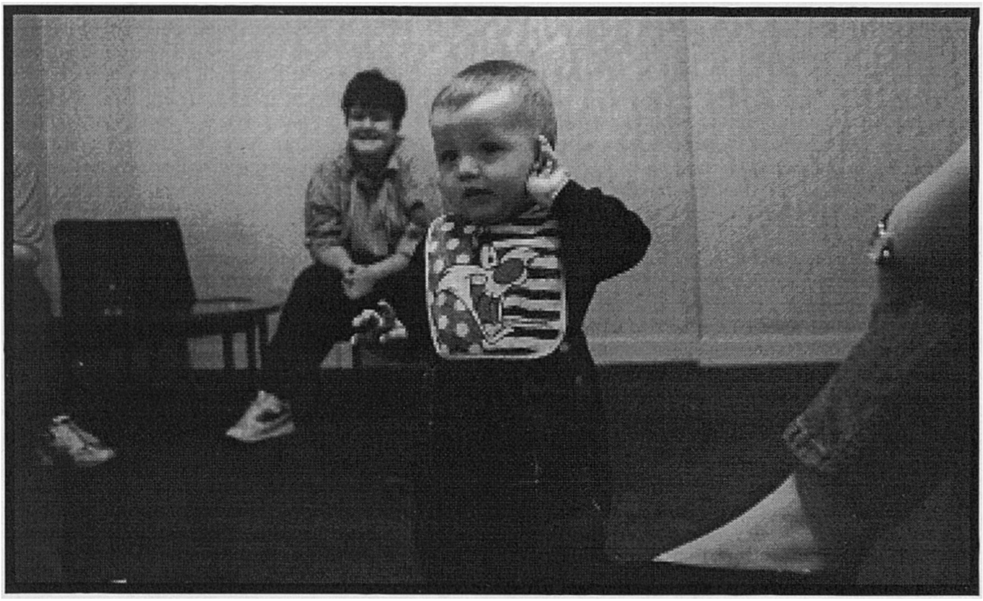

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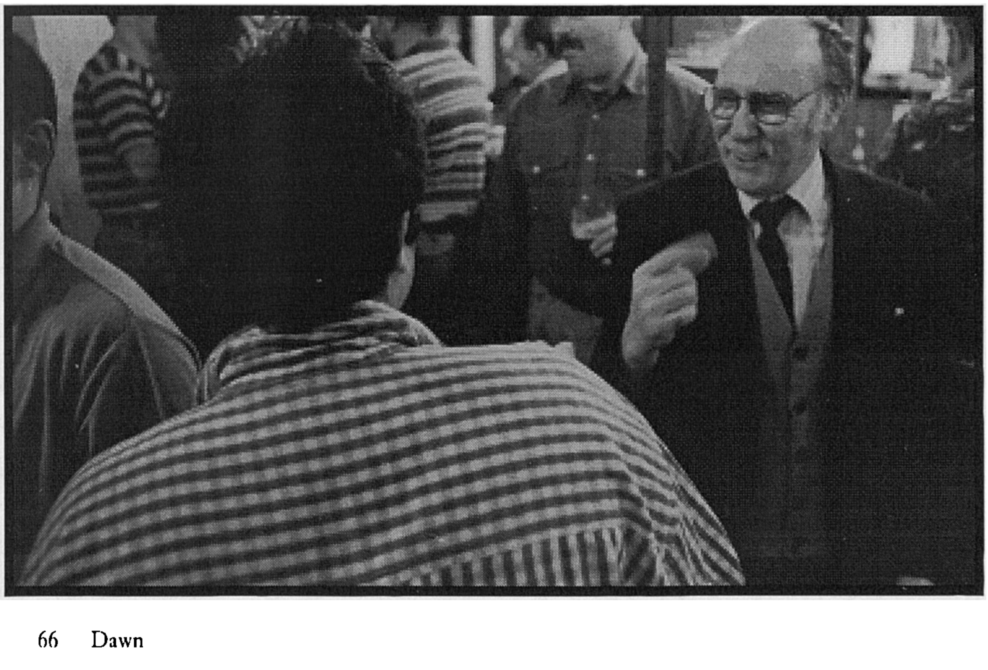

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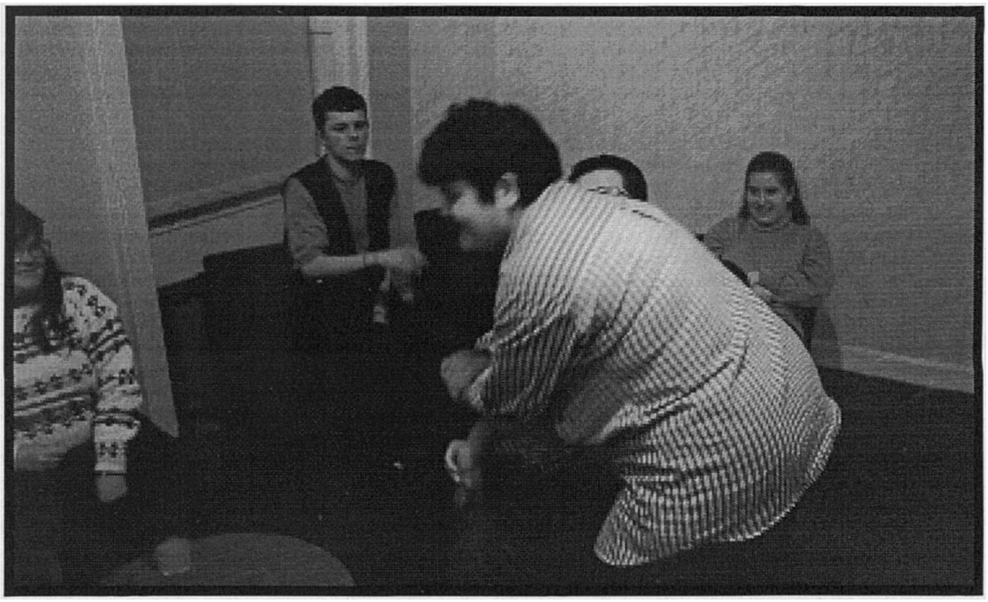

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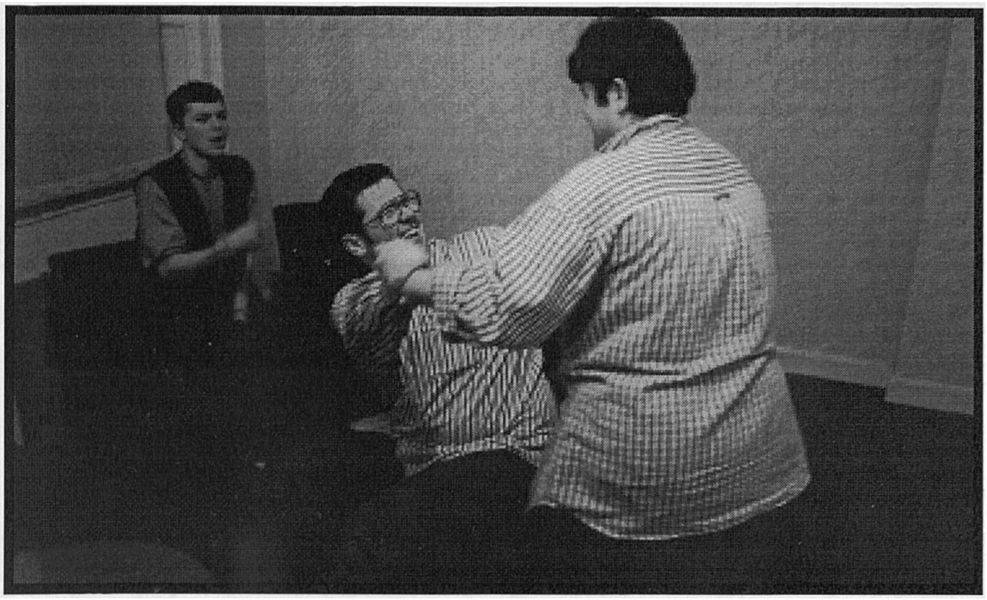

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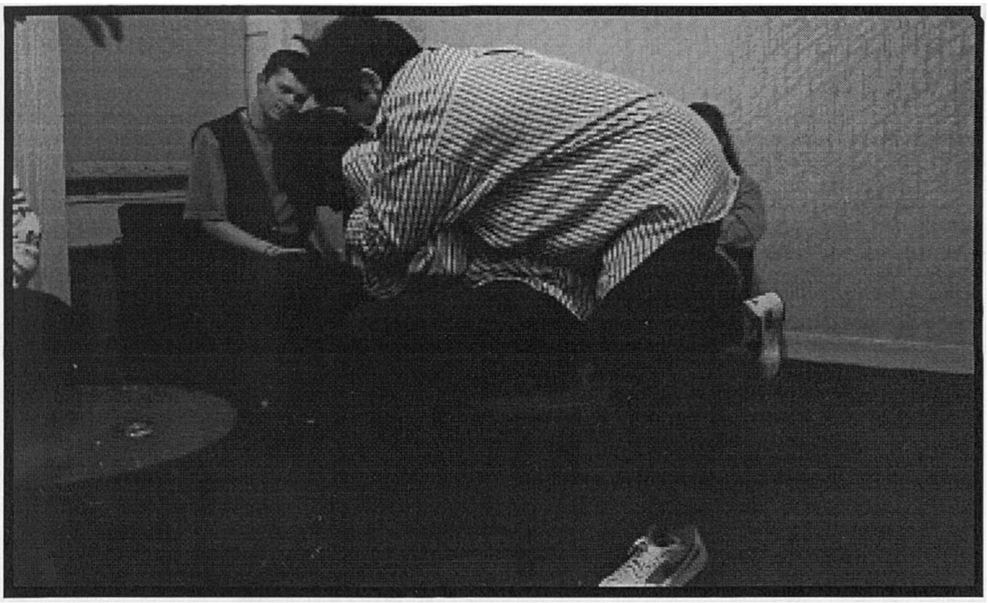

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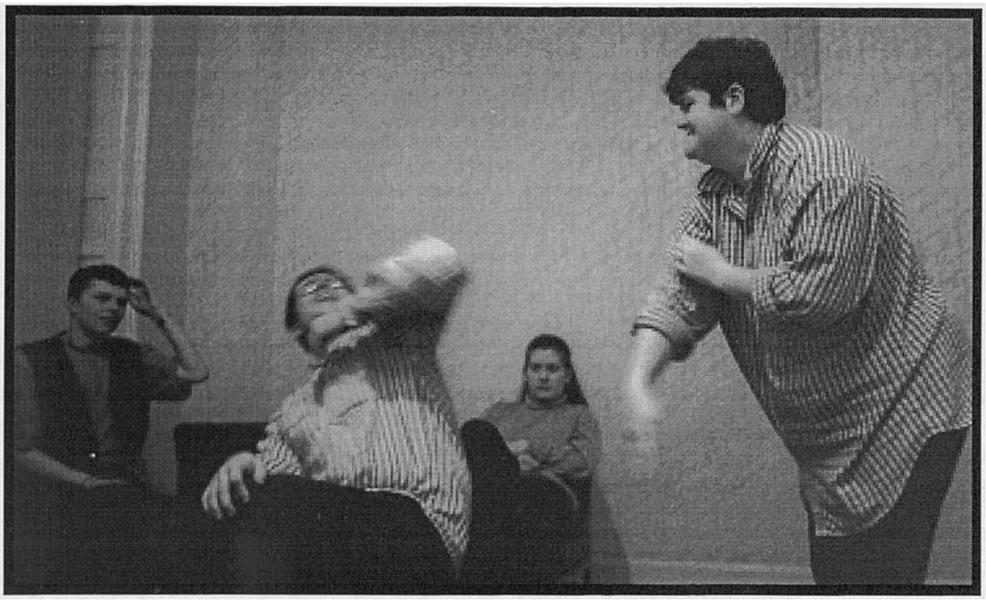

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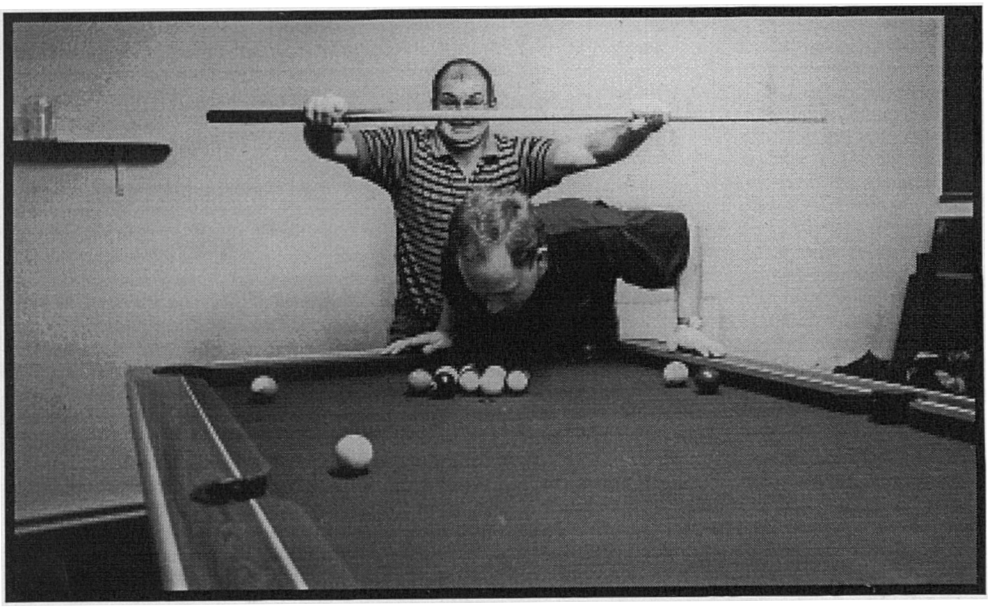

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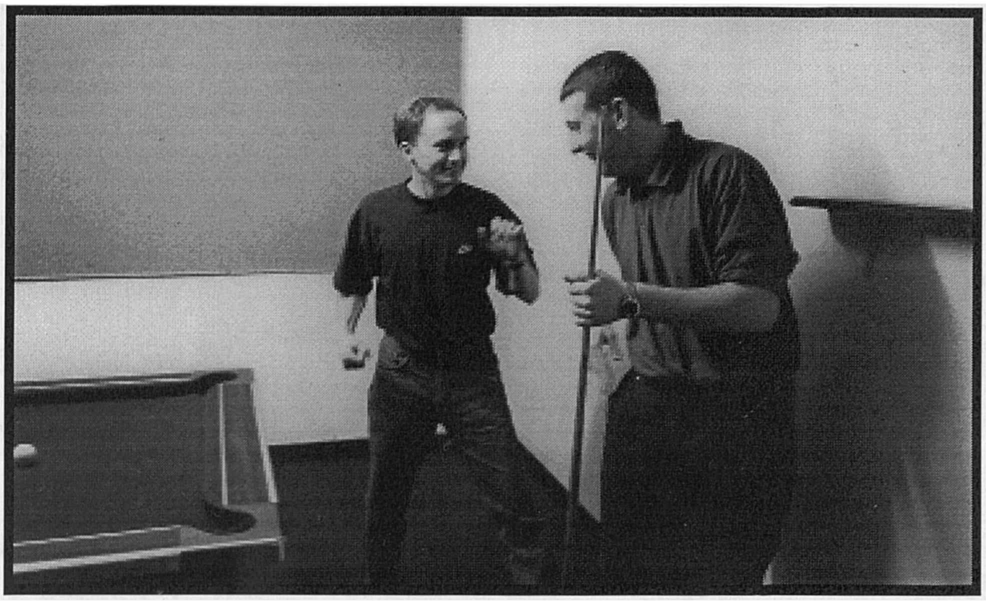

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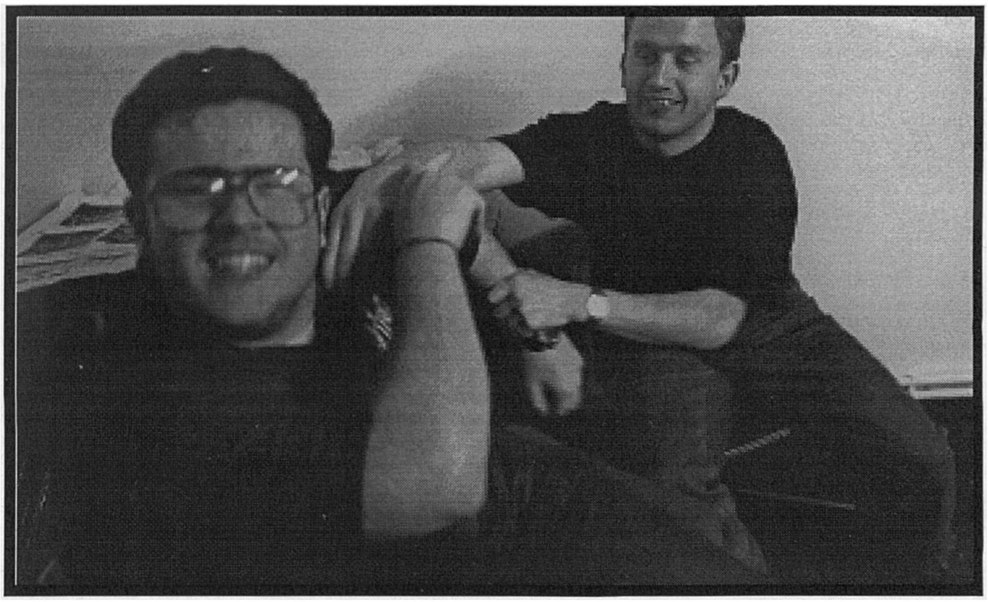

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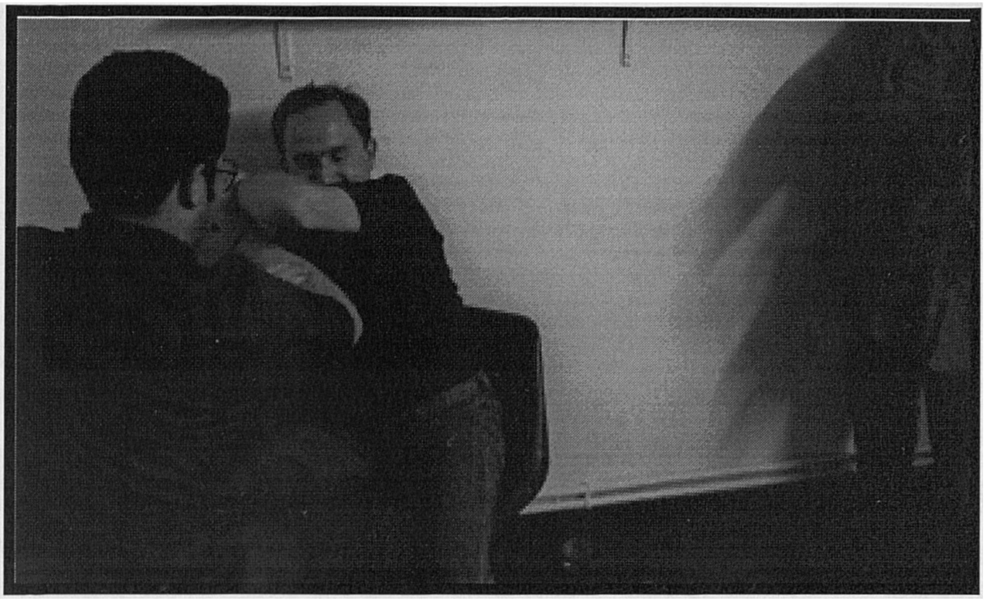

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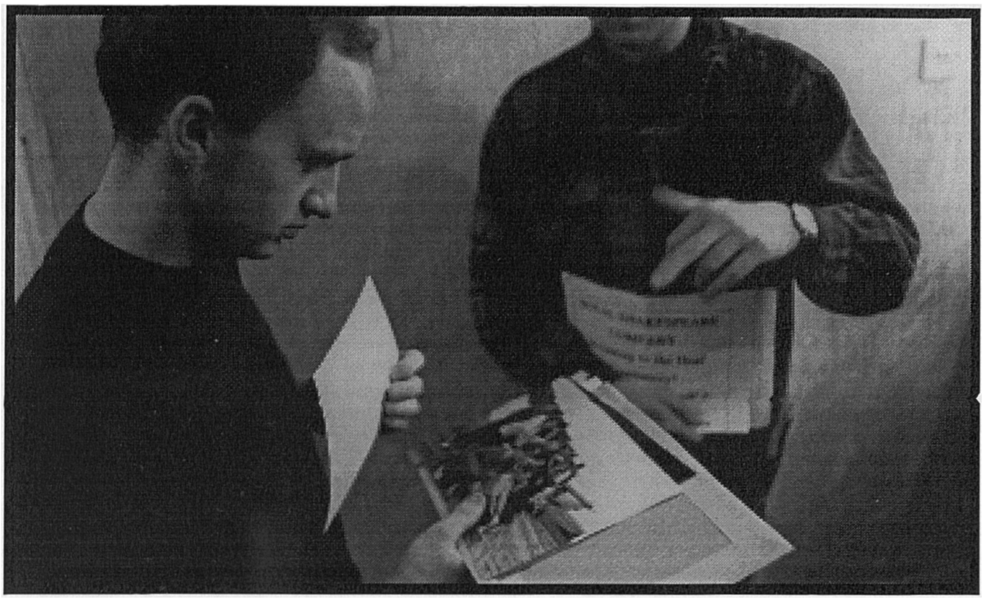

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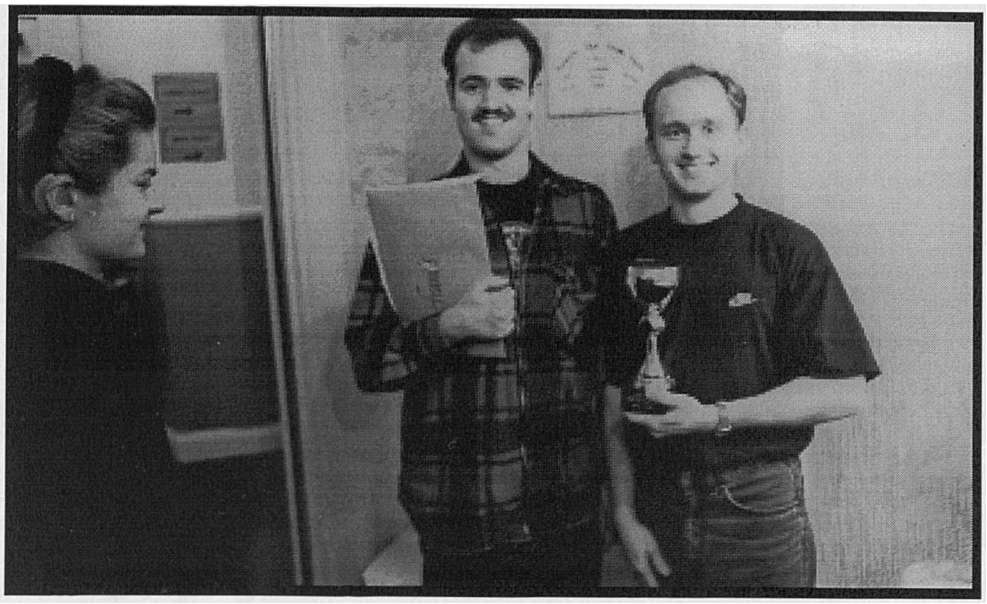

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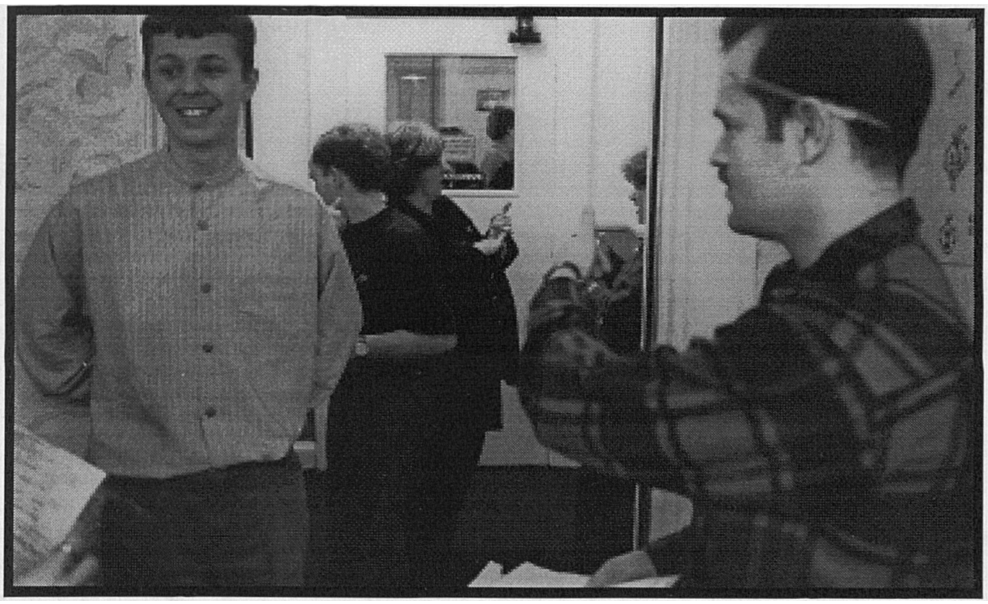

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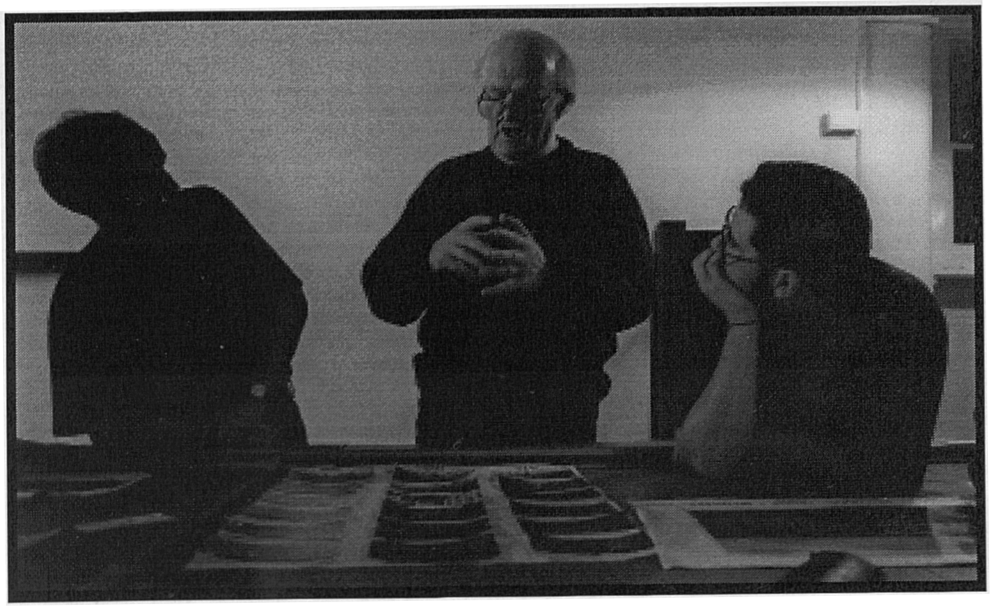

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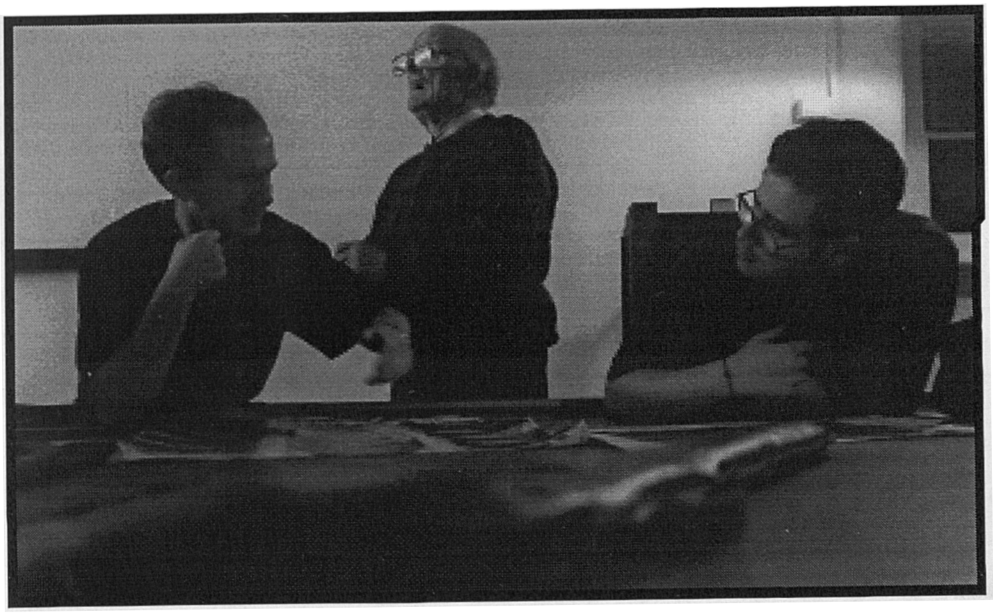

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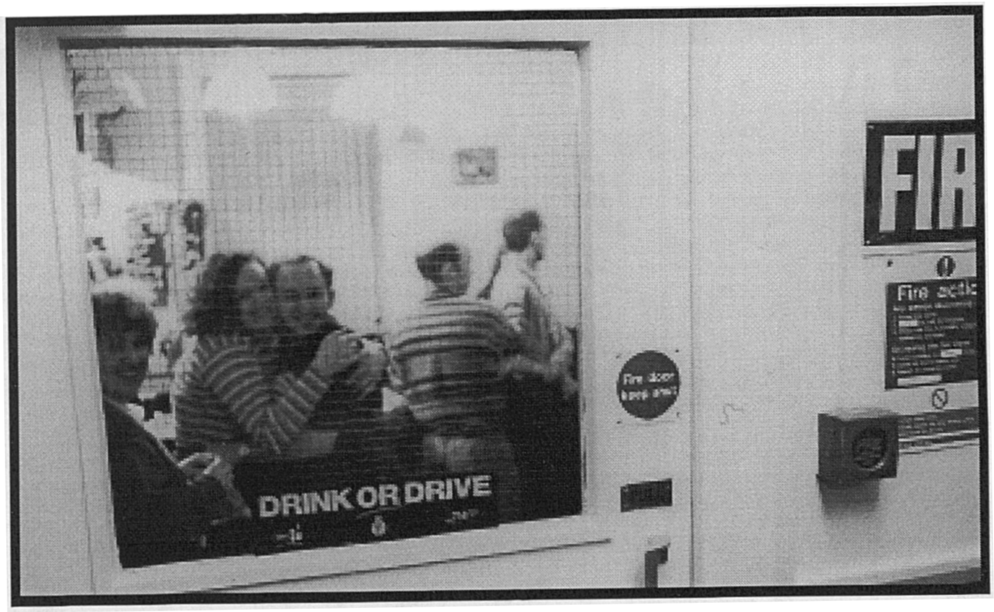

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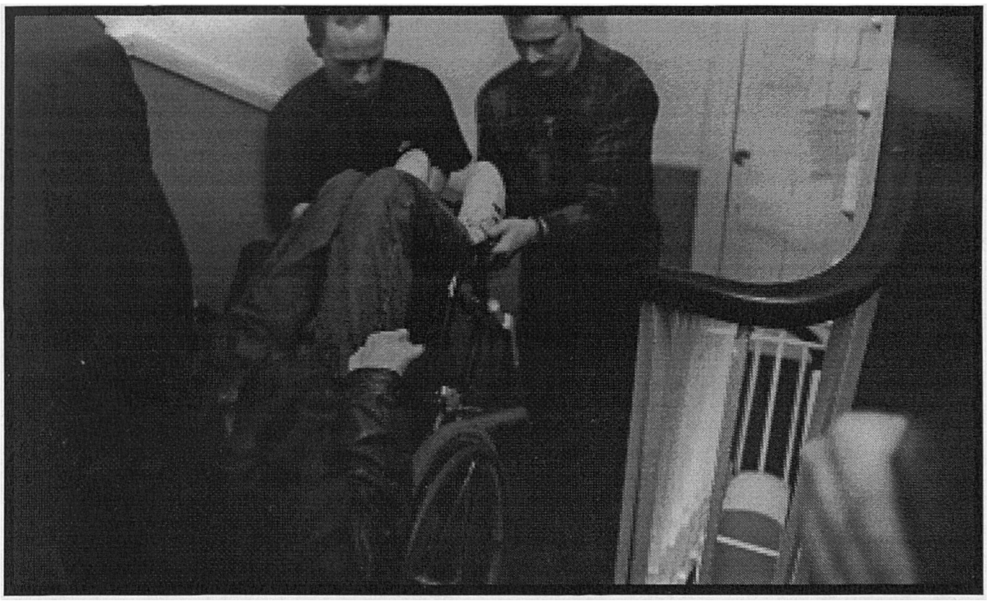

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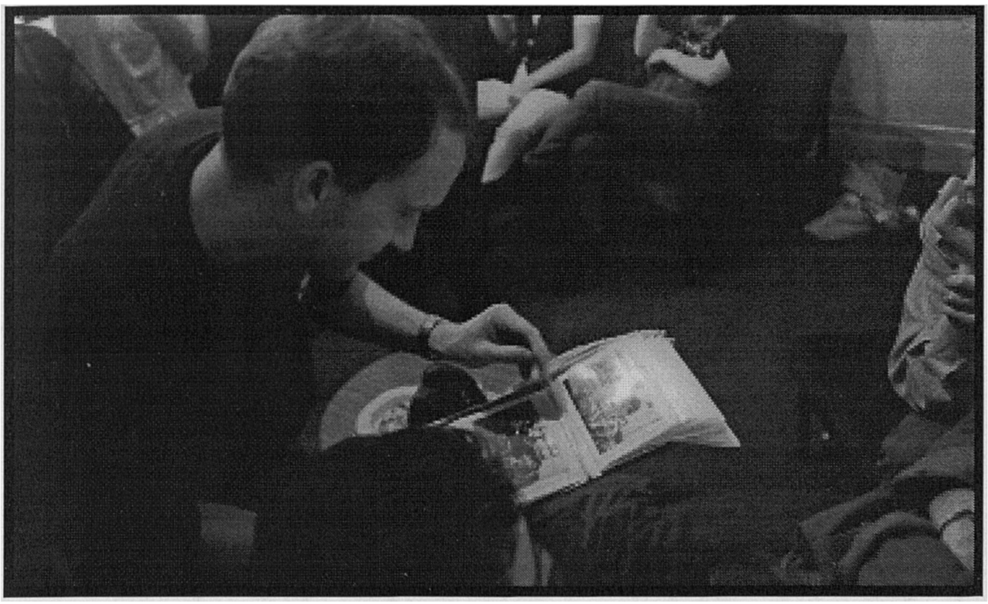

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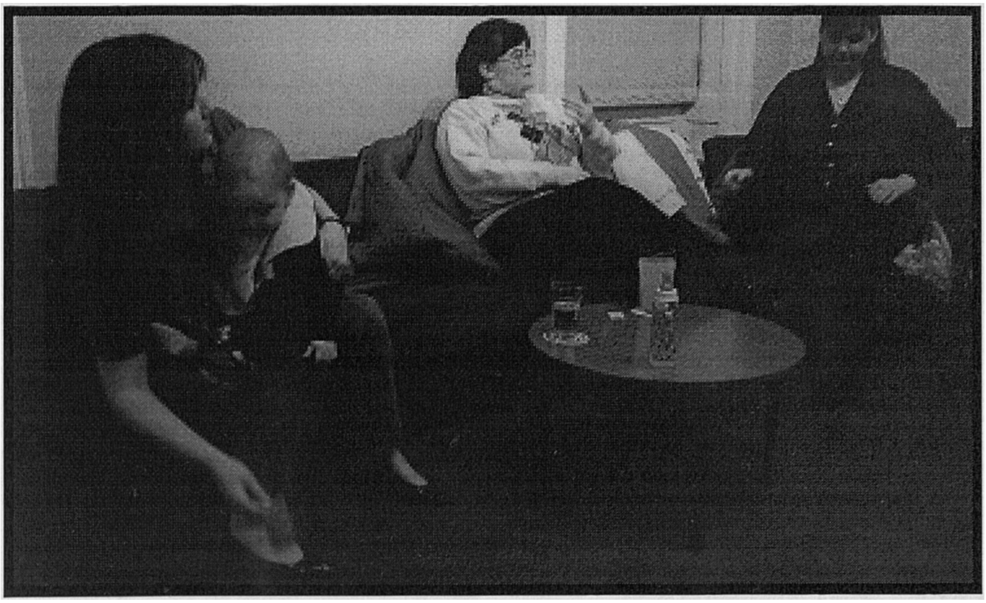
91 Michelle

92 Michelle

93 Michelle

94 Michelle



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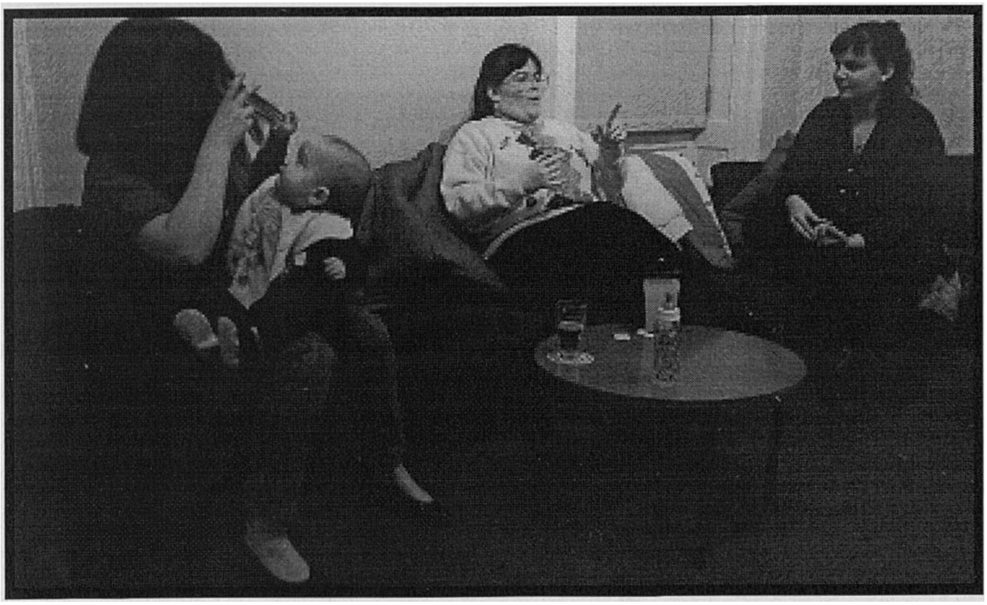

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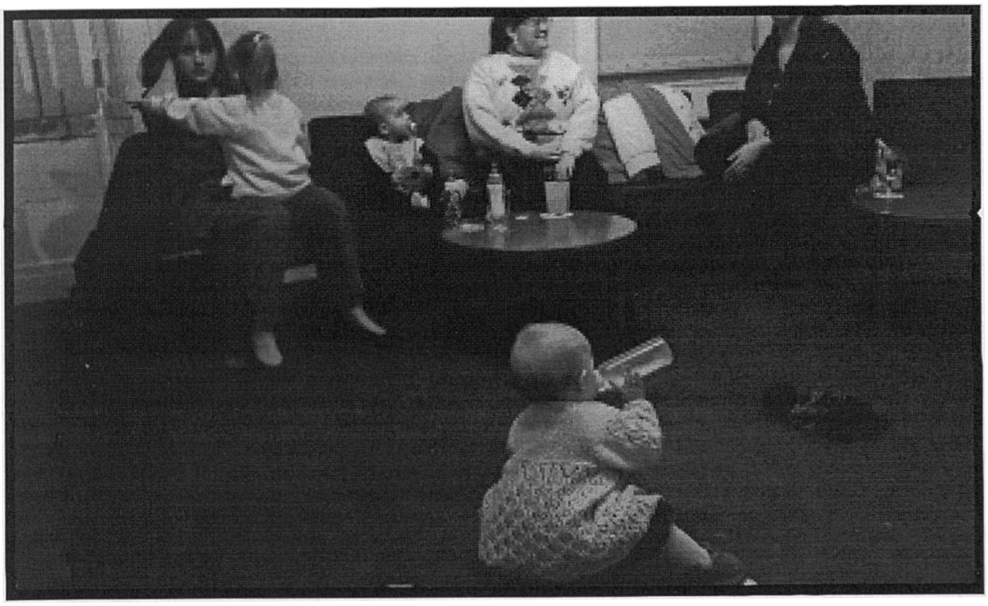

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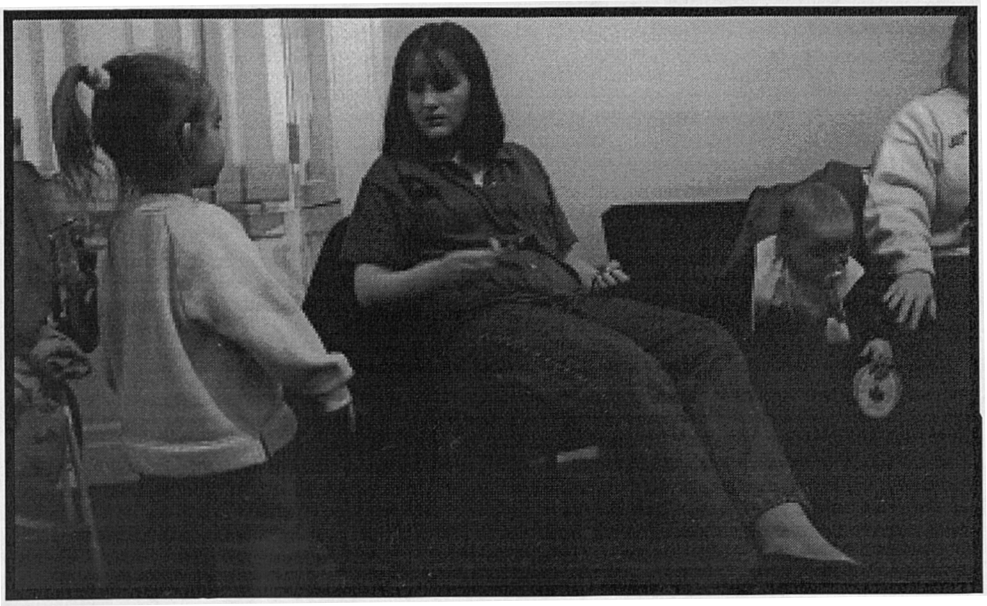
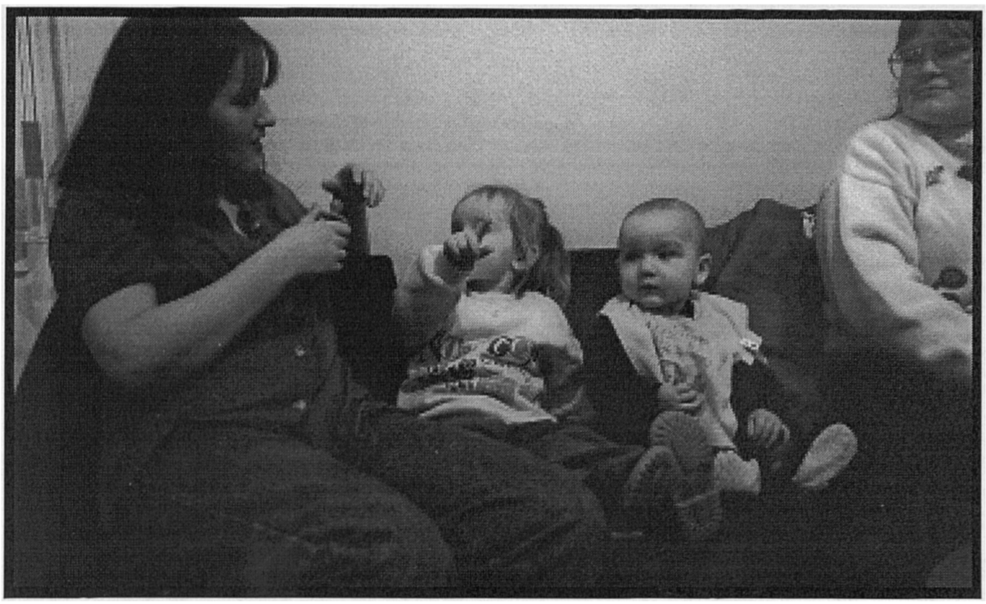


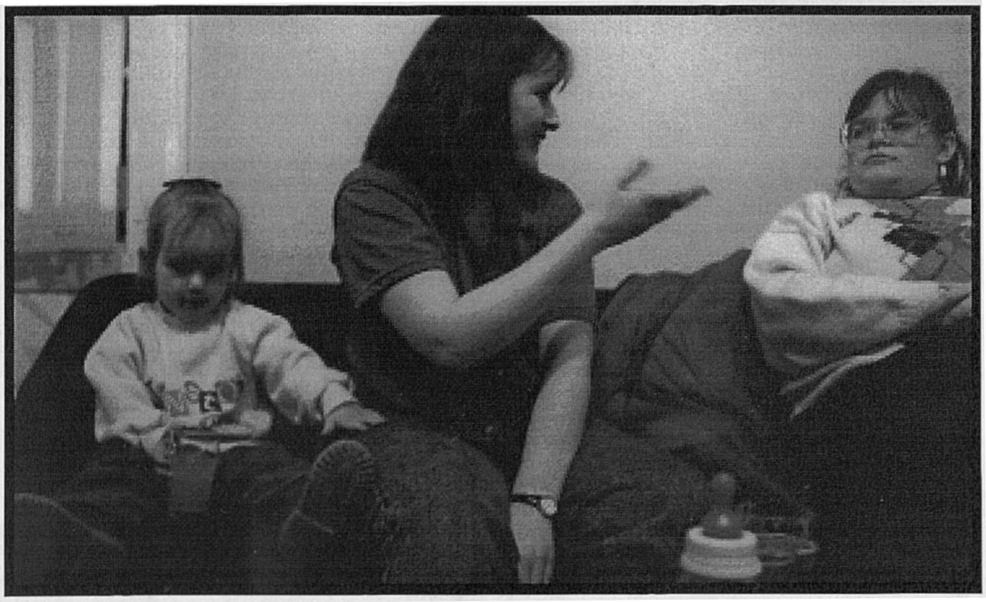
99 Michelle

100 Michelle



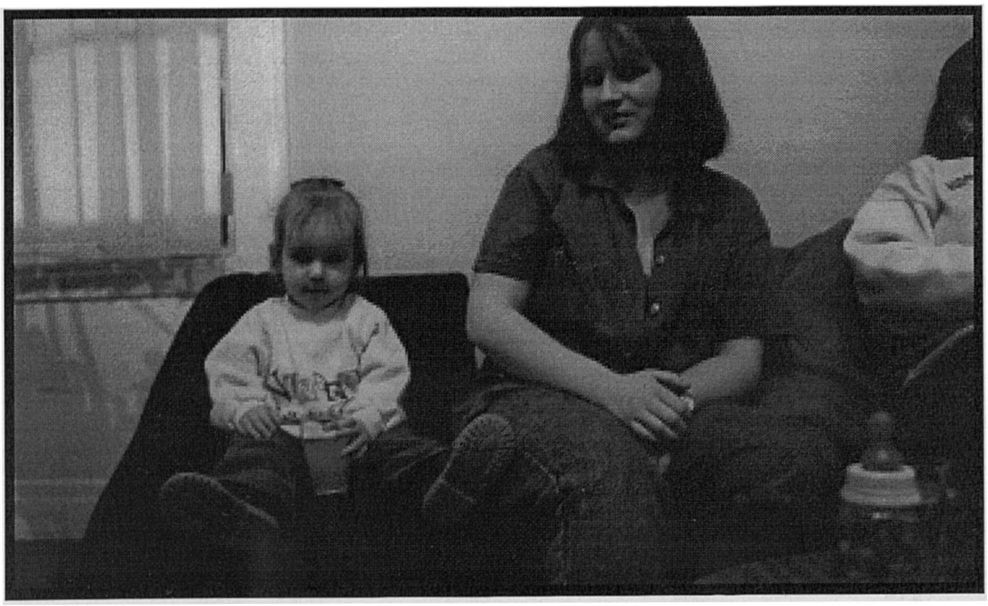
101 Michelle

102 Michelle



103 Michelle

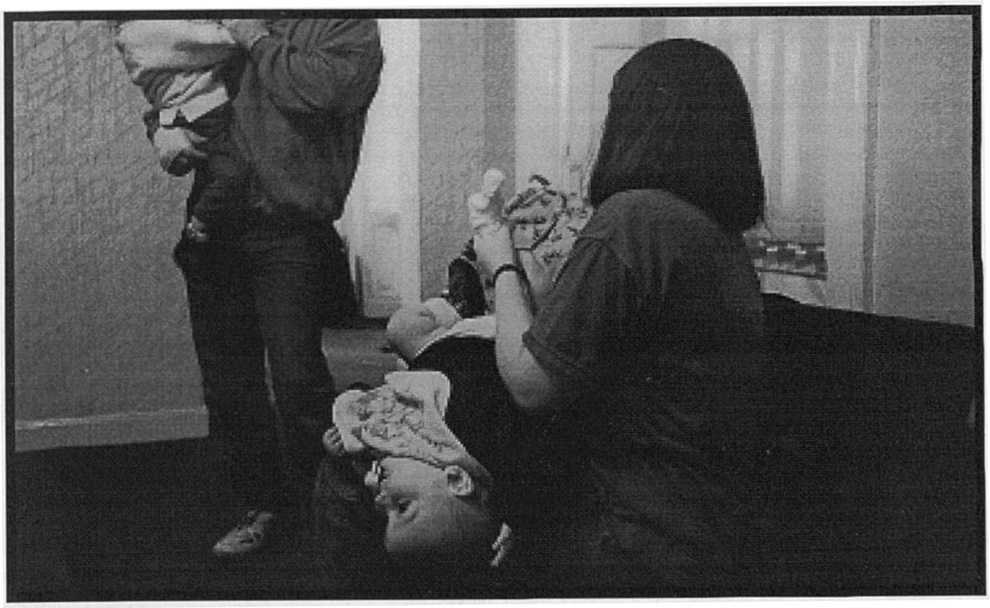
104 Michelle



105 Michelle

106 Michelle

107 Michelle



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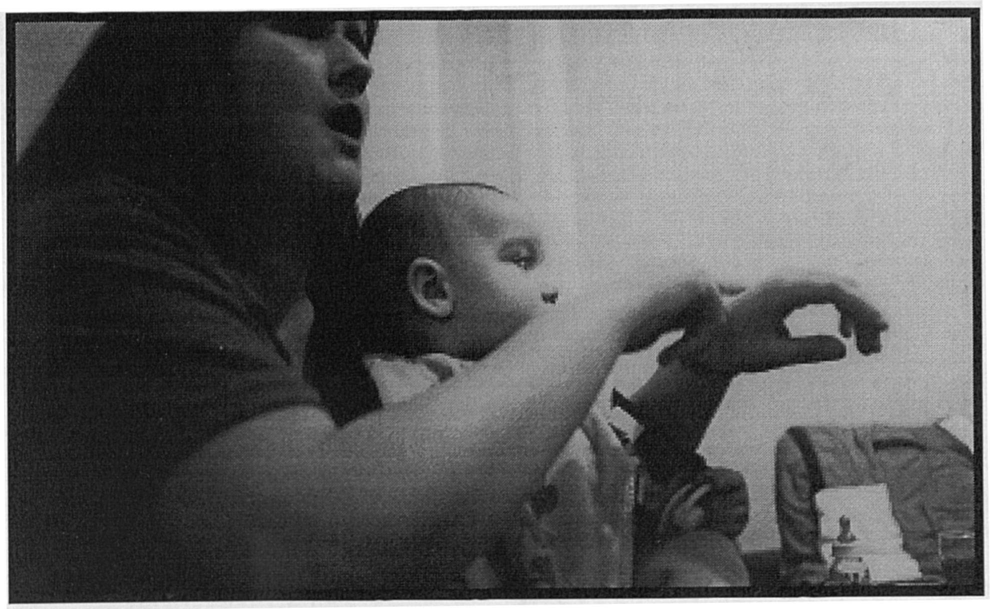
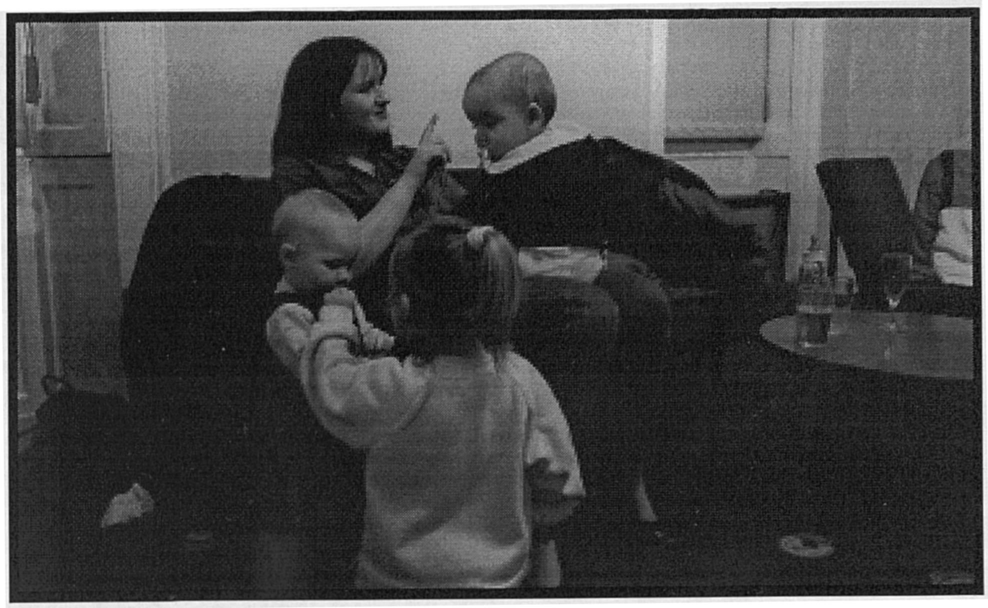


109 Michelle

110 Michelle



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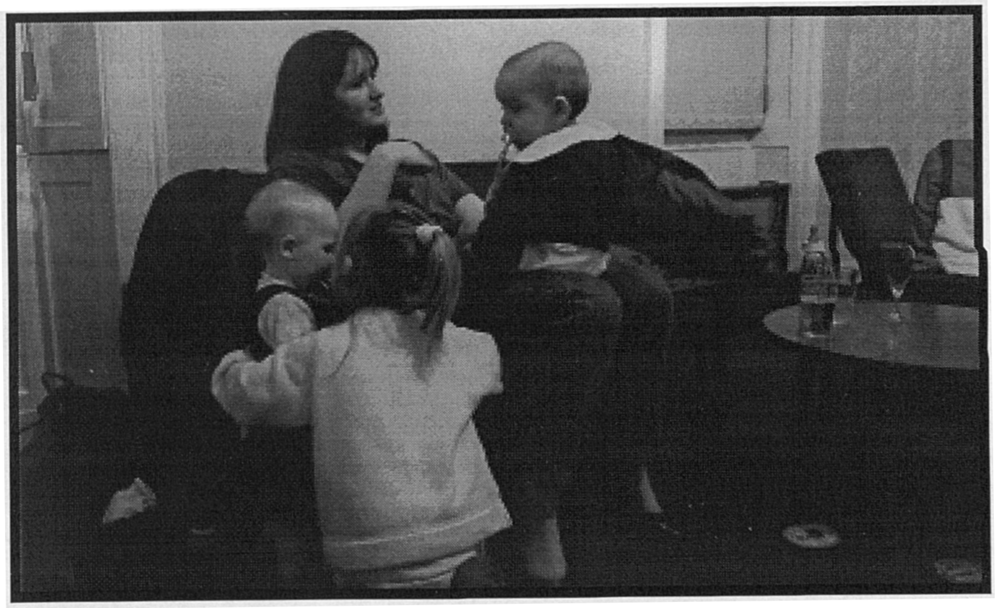
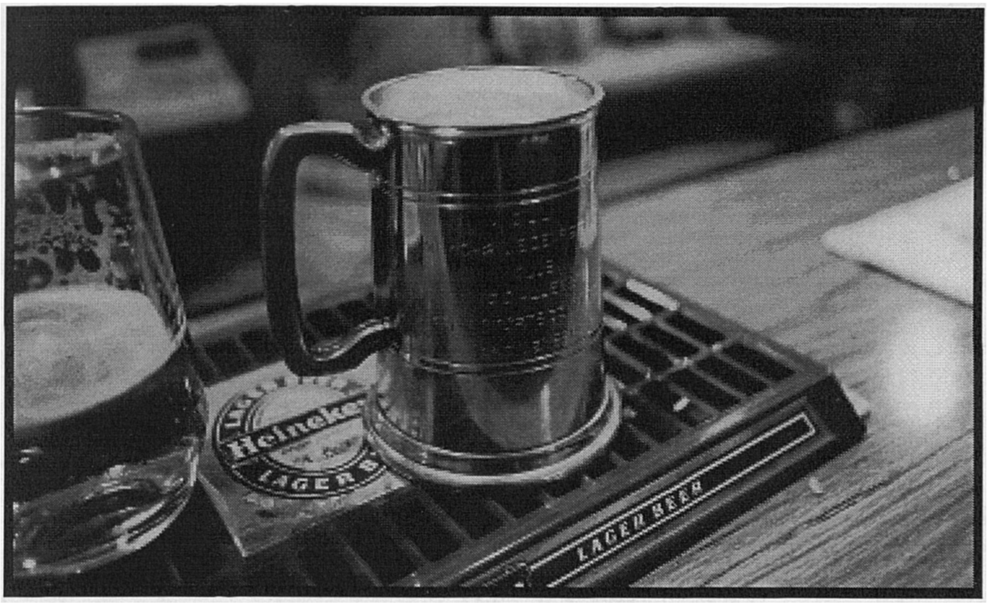


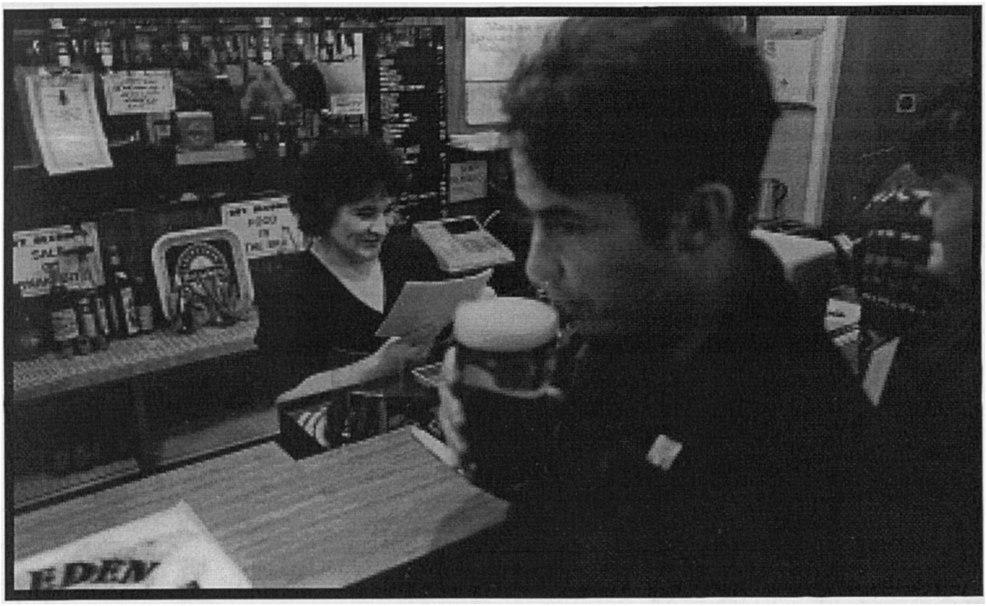
112 Michelle

113 Iris



114 Iris

115 Iris



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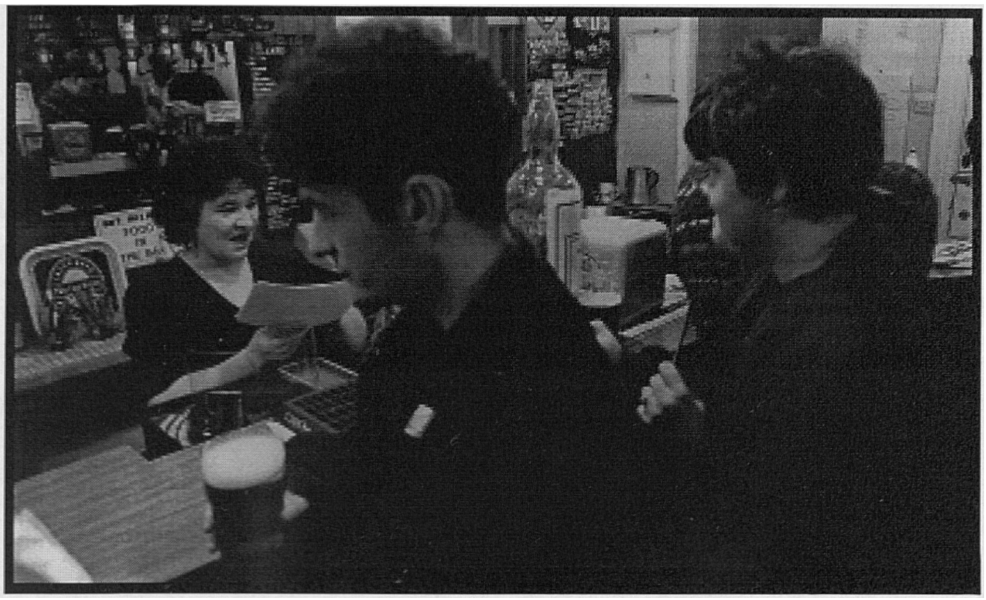

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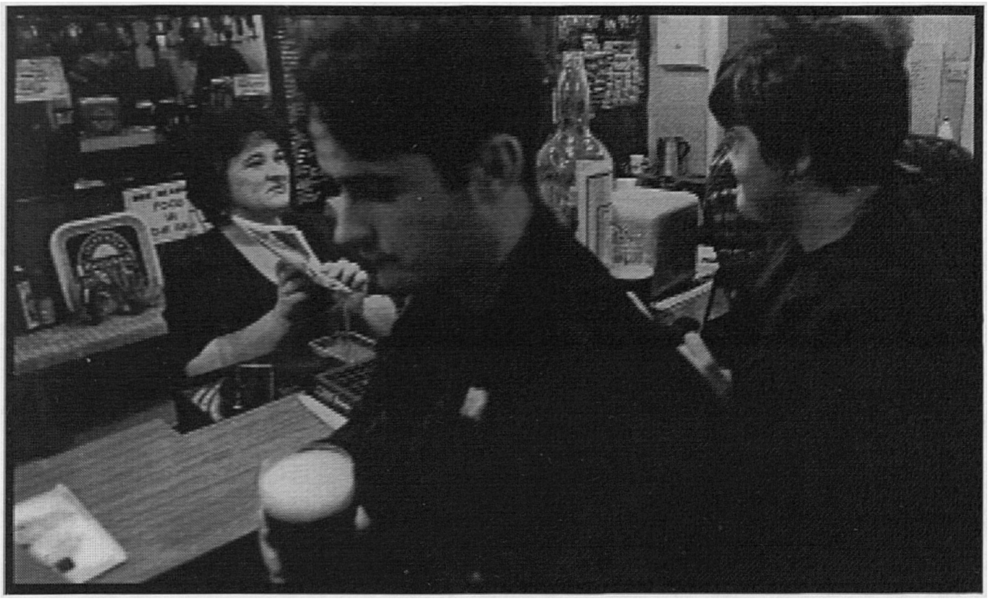

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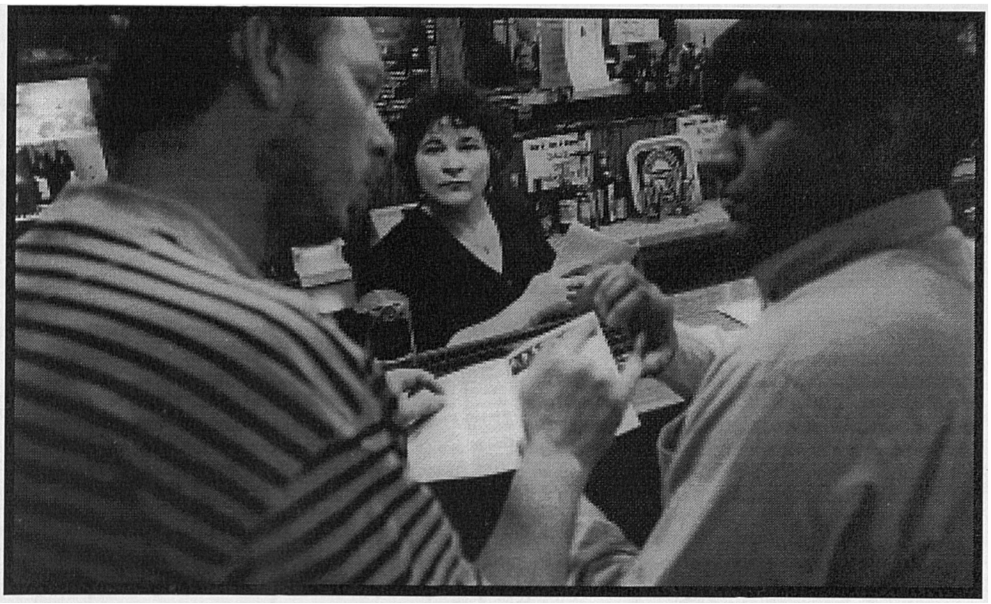

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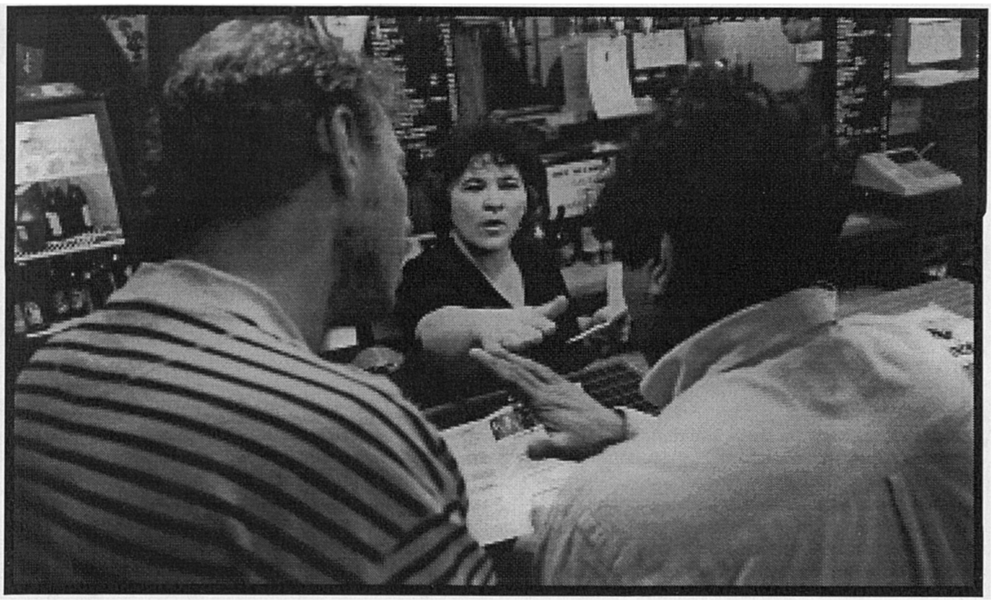

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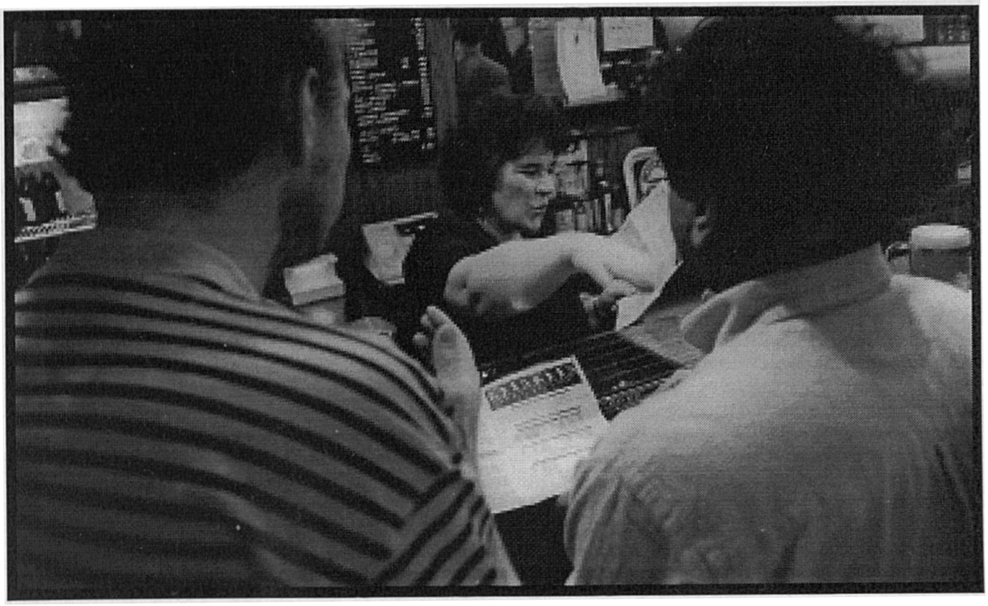

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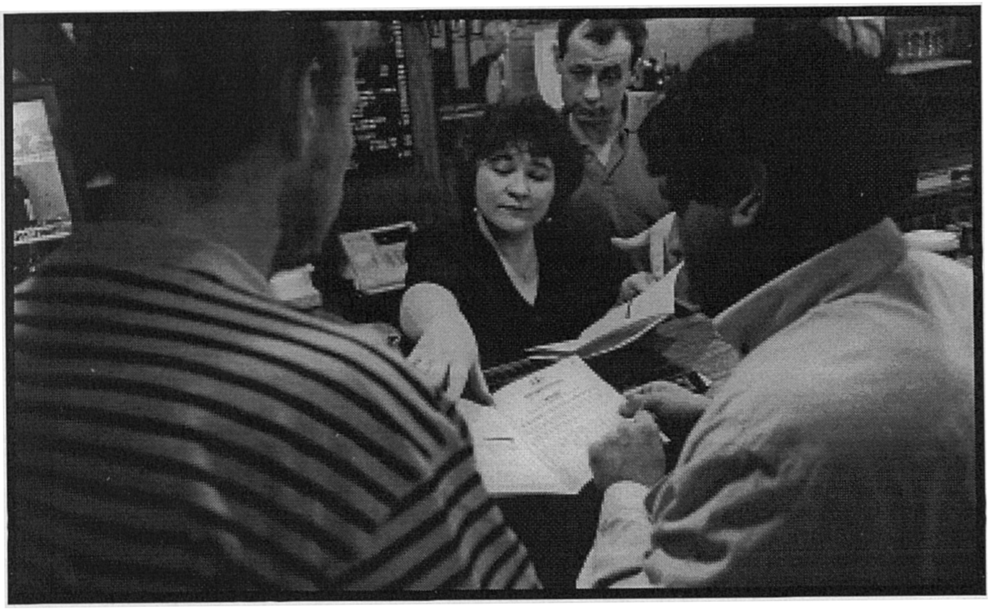

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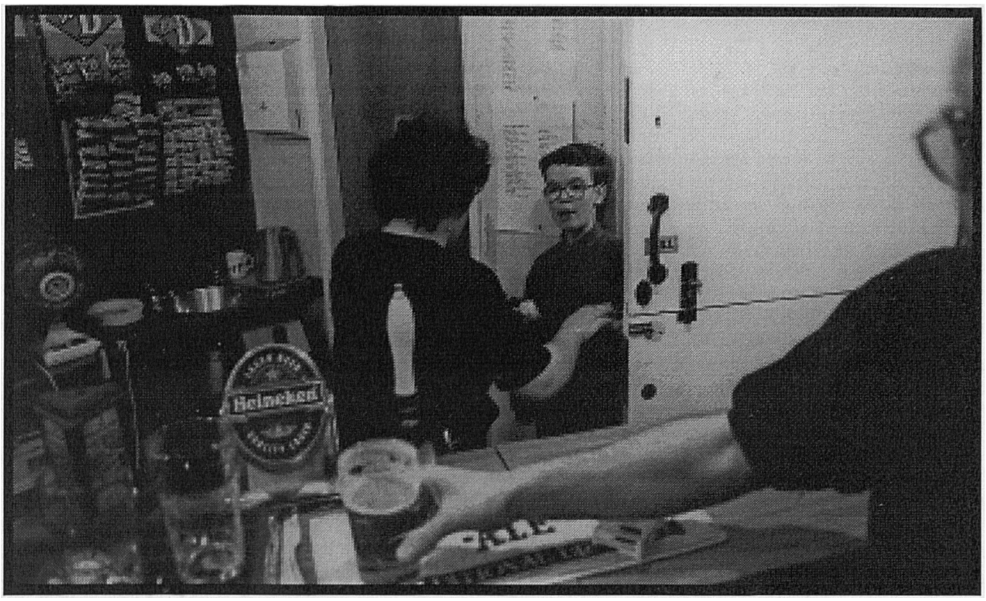

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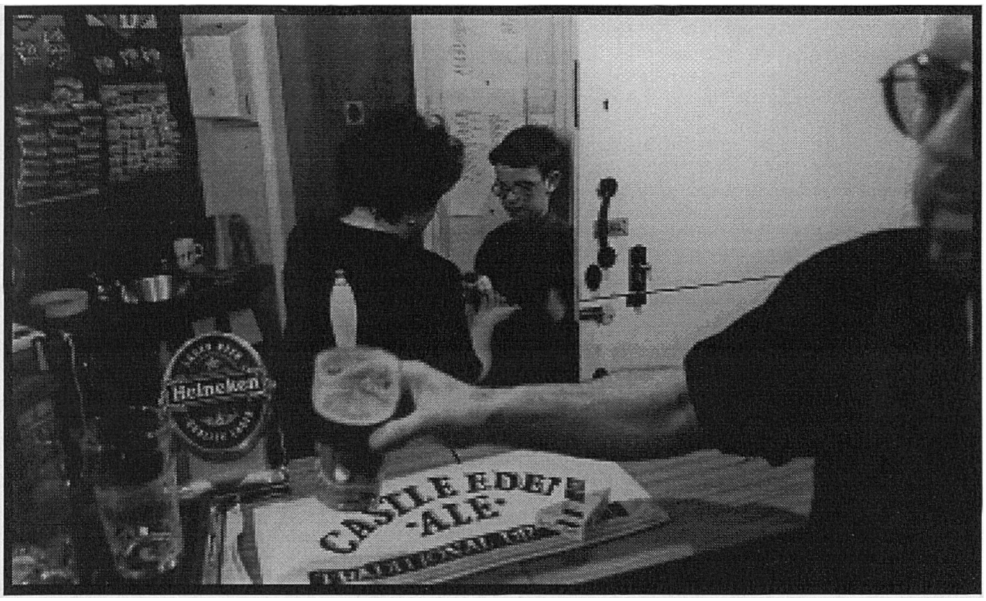


124 Iris

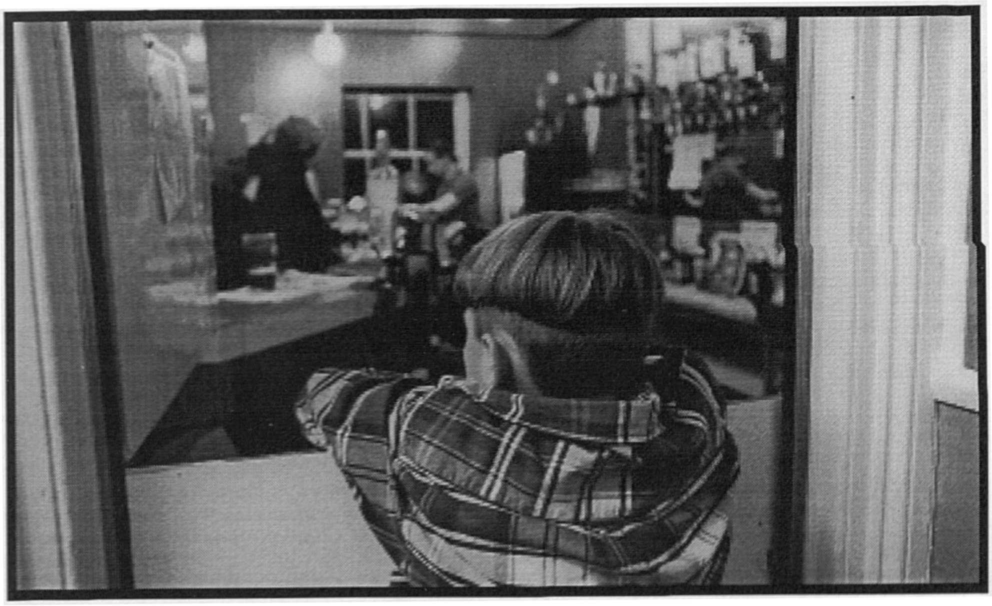
125 Iris

126 Iris

127 Iris

128 Iris

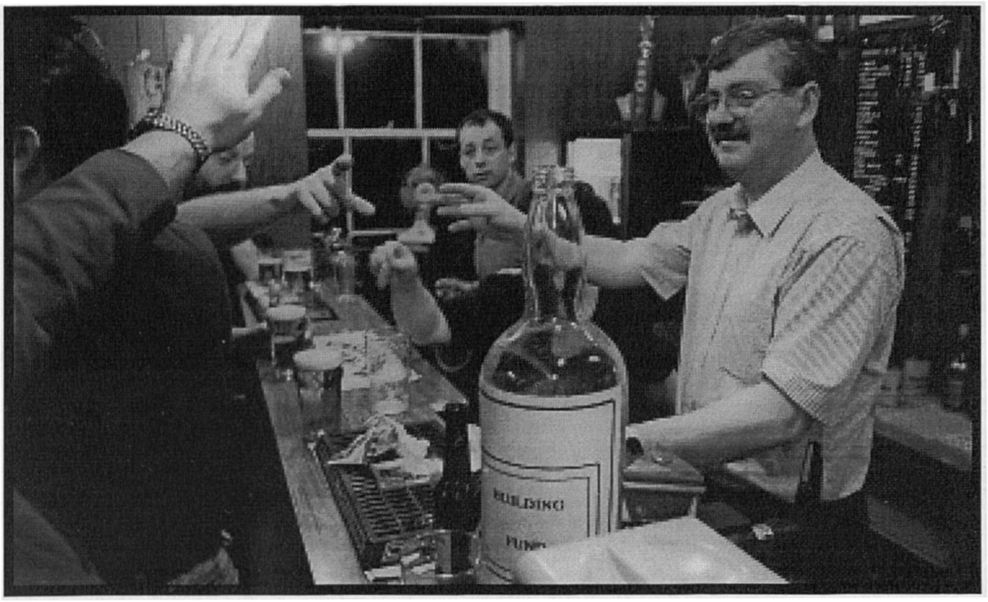
129 Iris



130 Iris

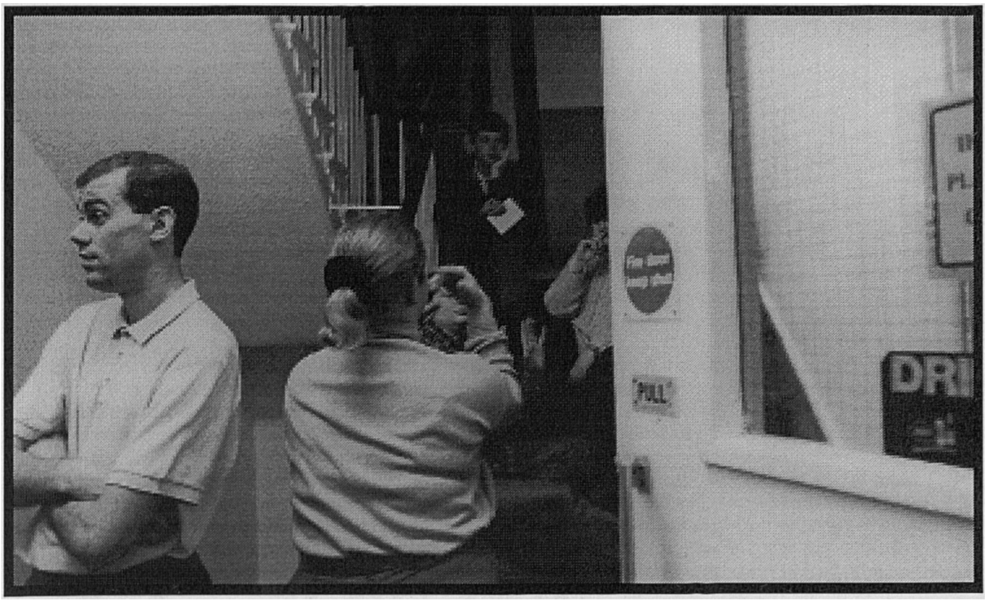
131 Iris

132 Iris



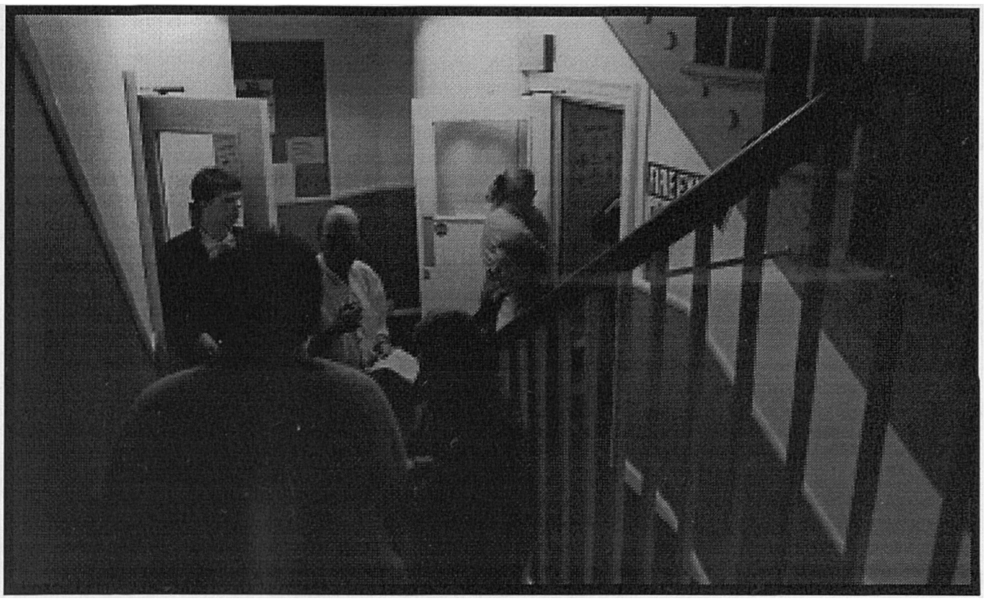
133 Iris

134 Helen

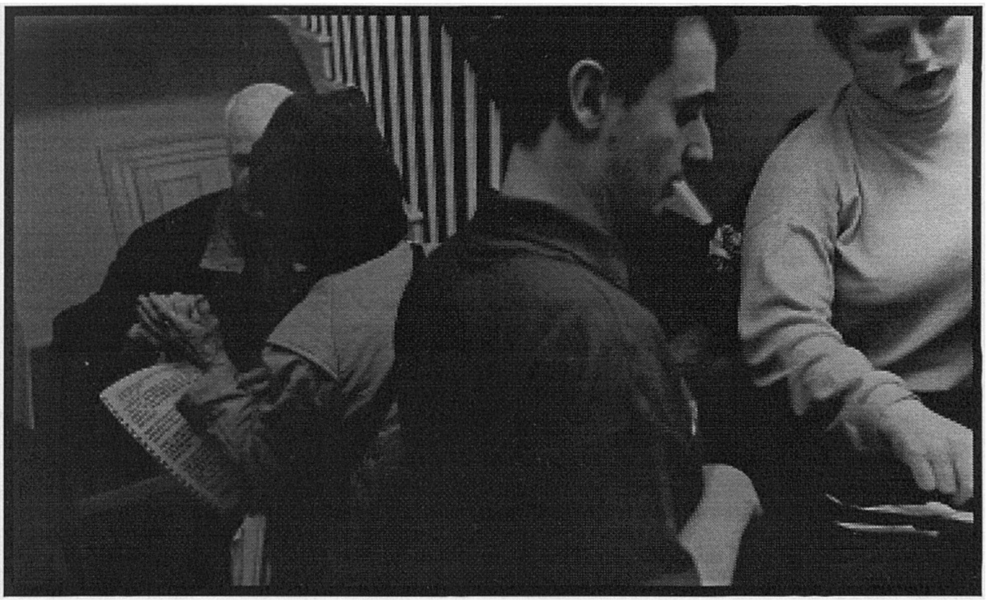


135 Helen

136 Helen

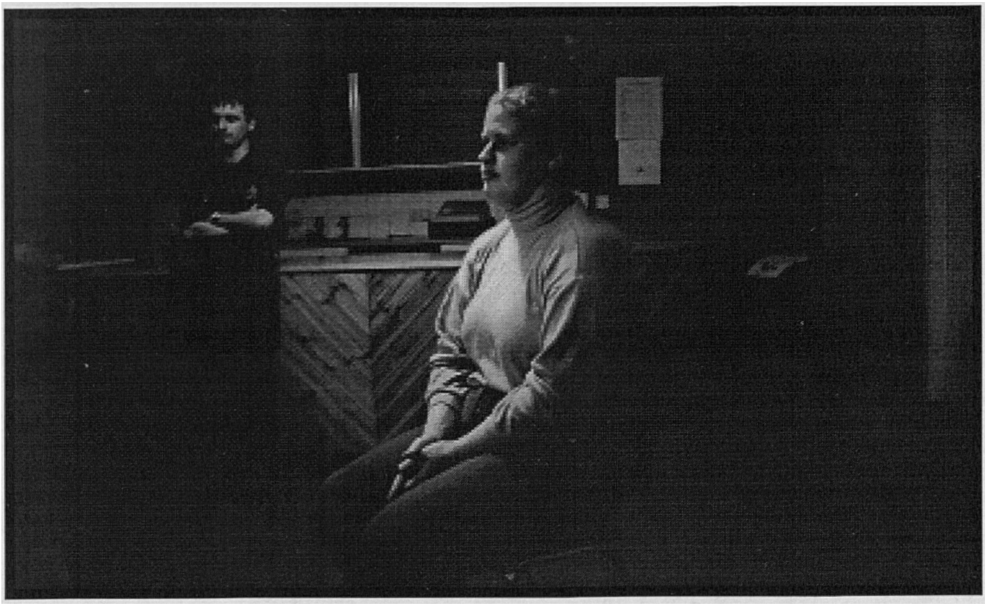


137 Helen

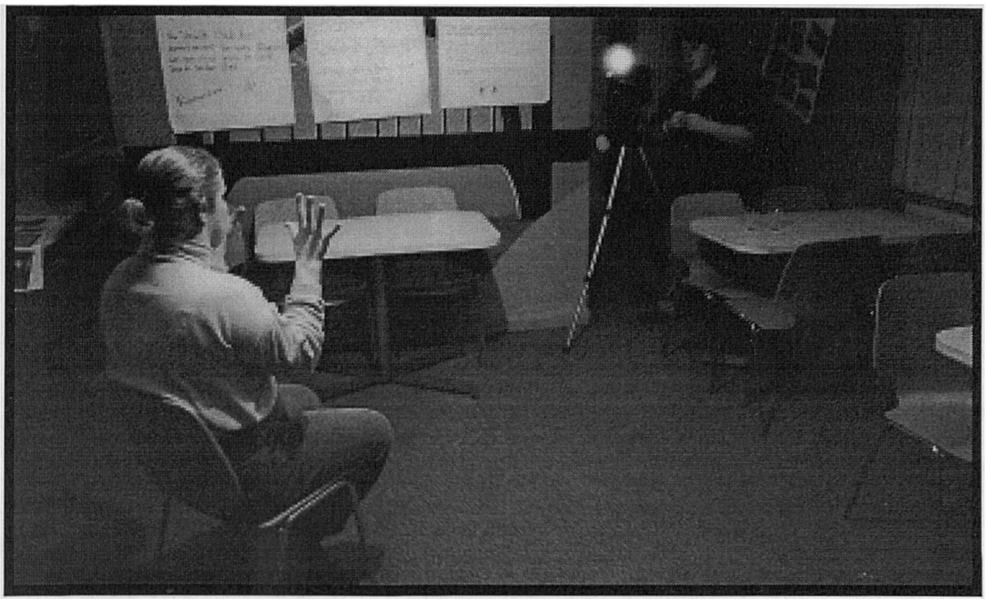


138 Helen

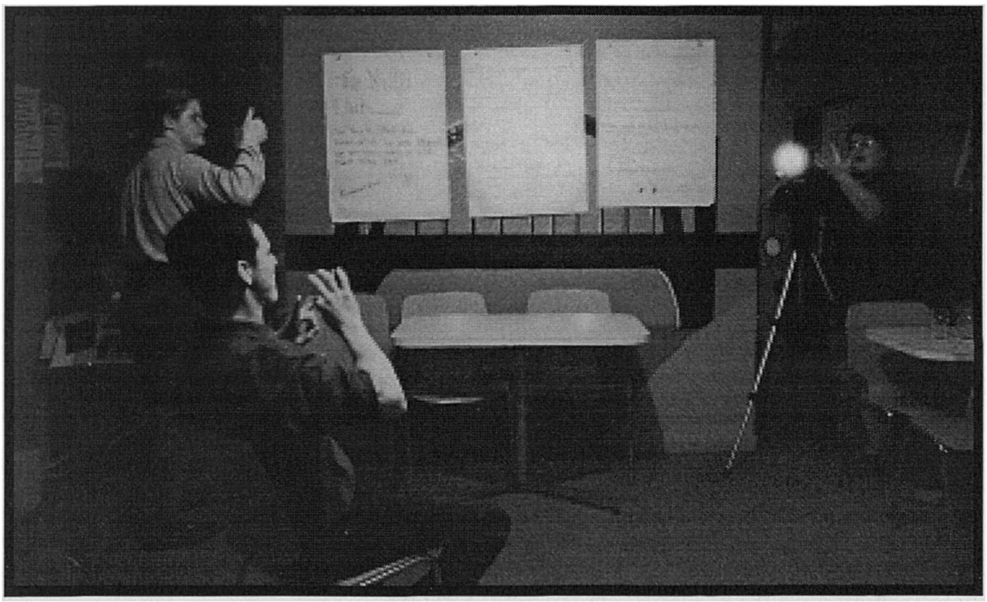
139 Helen



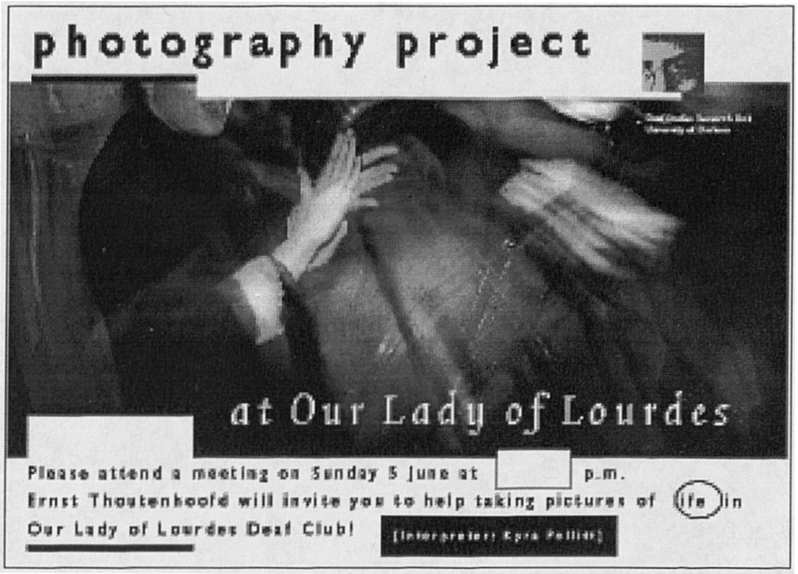
140 Helen



141 Helen



142 Helen



Please attend a meeting on Sunday 5 June at ☐ p.m.
Ernst Thoutenhoofd will invite you to help taking pictures of life in Our Lady of Lourdes Deaf Club!
[Interpreter: Kyra Pollitt]

Figure 5.1
Poster used to advertise the project in the Deaf club, inviting Deaf people to partake (original size A3).

What is presented in this part of the project is a view of the Deaf club, through photographs which depict what I saw through the viewfinder of a still camera. I have to a degree followed my own æsthetic sensibilities in the recording options for the photographs, but some elements were driven by circumstances. For example, after taking some initial photographs during an evening not included in the project, I found that the lighting circumstances would normally require the use of flash (setting up additional lighting would have been far to cumbersome and intrusive). However, some Deaf people in the Deaf club commented negatively on the bright flashes which interfered with signed communication, and for many others the flash was a source of visual distraction. In addition, the flash attracted a lot of attention, unnecessarily stalling the natural flow of events in the room. I consequently chose to record on Ilford 400° (ASA) black and white film, raised to 1600° and developed in special developer. The lens I selected was a 28mm wide-angle, which offers a larger aperture than the more common 35-80mm zoom lens which is supplied as standard with the Canon Eos 10 camera. This combination of film and lens meant that I could record more unobtrusively in low-light circumstances without using flash (f2.8/125). However, raising the sensitivity of the film results in coarser grain and slight loss of detail in the photographs. I am going into this level of detail here not so much for methodological reasons but primarily to show that often practical decisions are dependent on the appropriate technical skills of the researcher as well as access to types of equipment, and secondarily to show that such practical decisions have stylistic consequences: coarse grain photographs have often been associated with social criticism documentaries and small local art production, and were notably popular in the seventies.

The reasons I had for taking photographs in the first place are an additional factor in shaping the data. As my diary reveals, foremost among them was this (edited) one:

> "15 March 1994. I hope that photographs of the Deaf club will show me something about Deaf people's visual perception."
>
> "25 April. Firstly, could Deaf people possibly develop the cognitive abilities hinted at by Sacks (1990) because the nature of their auditory reception encourages a more ocular-centred perception; and secondly, could such outlook source a particular æsthetic sensibility particular to those who are Deaf?"

Such thinking functions, in the recording of the photographs, as a sort of 'briefing'. It is inconceivable to think that one could enter into a Deaf club as a researcher with a camera without already having formed some idea of what the data might look like, and crucially, acting upon that: to foresee is dependent upon imagination. For example, I of course expected to see a lot of signing and although I never made a conscious decision about focusing on signed interaction in particular, the photographs I took show comparatively more signing than do the photographs the Deaf pupils took themselves. Although signing acts occur regularly in my visual environment, they are apparently still more a photogenic topic for me than they are for Deaf people themselves—or maybe they are to me, as an outsider and language learner, less private, less strongly associated with personal communication, and therefore more available as a topic: hearing people are not used to the idea that one might photograph language meaning in quite the literal way one can photograph the act of signing. What I am referring to is Sacks' comment (discussed in chapter 2) that signing is necessarily embodied. Although I can take pictures of hearing people engaged in spoken language conversation, in terms of a representation of language activity this is not as direct and intimate as taking pictures of Deaf people engaged in signed conversation. In spoken language, the linguistic activity is somehow more divorced from its photographic representation (i.e. from the body as the medium of language) than is the case with the representation of sign, which cannot (except as notation) be represented other than as pictures of bodies.

At the same time, I was never asked not to photograph signed discourse by anybody in the club, although the rapport we had was candid enough for them to request me not to photograph when they did not want photographs taken: they knew I would not take offence. I therefore distinguish between social constraints on recording photographs and the collective experience of viewing photographs, because Deaf people in the Deaf club did select significantly more 'favourite' photographs which showed signing than did Deaf pupils who recorded less signing in the first place (61% compared to 16% of all 'favourite' photographs contained signing, table 2 in the appendix). This result may be an indication of strong cultural identification Deaf people in the club have with sign language, but that this association is equally important to the Deaf pupils (despite having fewer photographs showing signing available to them) is illustrated by the quality of the association between the signing in the photograph and the reason for choosing it; in one instance in particular, a photograph was selected by a Deaf pupil, Melanie, because of the language meaning shown in the photograph:

> "Susan sign her name with her left arm" (photograph 60 in chapter 6, fourth choice).

The frozen action of the left arm stands as a metonymic identifier, a label linking not only Susan to her name, but Susan to her language, a language she shares with Melanie and which identifies them both culturally as well as socially.

Taking photographs in the Deaf club has helped me to sharpen my awareness of the difference between the approach Deaf pupils took in recording their environment and the oneused when I recorded in the Deaf club, and of the kinds of social information they recorded.

The visual environment through a viewfinder

Making a photo-documentary

During the 11 months of visits to the Deaf club, my eyes strayed few times from behind the camera. This means that there was little interaction between myself and the people who came forward to be photographed for an evening. Invariably these were Sundays, the only day in the week this Deaf club is open to non-members, and invariably they were evenings, the only time during which hearing visitors are welcome. The photographic descriptions and the written commentary therefore reflect a certain level of engagement based entirely upon visual perception, and of course describe events from my own 'point of view' to the extent that I took the pictures. However, the photographs describe events which occurred in the context of the Deaf people portrayed, and therefore characterise the activities engaged in by those Deaf people. The photographs also reflect, in some ways, their viewpoints (that is, their spatial orientation and occasionally their visual attention) within those activities.

The photographs are supported only by each other and linked by my comments, not by verbal agreement with or commentaries supplied by the Deaf people I photographed. The main problem with inviting Deaf people's comments on the visual themes in their life is that it requires that the unconscious be made conscious, which involves recognising patterns in behavioural and visual attention strategies. To date most comments on the visual surroundings of Deaf people do not move beyond the obvious (though not therefore less relevant), such as the use of text telephones and flashing door alarms, and waving hands to draw attention. This is not to say that Deaf people are not aware that more is going on visually—they may or may not be aware—but we should recognise that relaying that which comes naturally within a collective to a cultural outsider is not easy, especially when such outsiders rarely master the language, BSL, to an appropriate degree of fluency. In addition, our techniques for exploring the visual are still mostly based on the verbal, and in so far as research reports are concerned, that which can be recorded in written English.

As the comparison of signing in recorded photographs showed above, it is not necessarily the case that Deaf people will record that which is most pertinent to their environment because it may be, as it were, too obvious or common to form a serious photographic topic—whereas a cultural outsider, new to the environment, may see relevance in the same topic. In *addition*, casual photographers photograph mostly casually, that is, when they are not doing anything else worthwhile, often failing to photograph that which actually interests them most—so much that they cannot be bothered with a camera at that moment. Because I entered the scene without really knowing what to look for (despite my imagination) or even being able to follow or grasp events taking place, I recorded to an extent randomly, whatever, and whenever. As explained above, I do not wish to suggest that I photographed totally randomly: I too photograph that which I find striking in some way. The benefits of such data gathering while still in 'cultural disorientation' have been commented on in detail elsewhere (Collier and Collier 1986).

The photographs as data are therefore my descriptive 'field notes' of the visual environment of Deaf people. The data in this project are not Deaf people's opinions on Deaf culture or community—although they necessarily provide the framework for the study—but data on the nature of their visual perception (the next chapter), and relevant visual elements of the Deaf club as social space in this chapter.

Being hearing in a Deaf club

I found that while my intention was to record some 100 photographs per evening spent in the club, I moved to a sort of 'viewfinder mode' as soon as I entered the premises: taking 100 photographs in three hours means there is little opportunity to put the camera down. An ulterior reason for keeping my camera at the ready was that there was less expectation on the part of Deaf people for me to converse with them, which would have meant that I could not have fully concentrated on my subject; but a fortuitous side-effect was that my reticence in signing was conveniently hidden by holding a camera. I believe that this is a wholly common 'shyness' on the part of BSL learners, especially since to express one's self quite so openly and actively through the body is not more generally pursued or positively judged outside the confines of the Deaf community. More often than not, small groups of hearing people huddled together in corners of rooms or away from areas where interaction with Deaf people was unavoidable (such as the tables in the bar area), even though presumably the point of going to the Deaf club for them is to improve their signing skills. There are visually recognisable elements to such 'hearing pockets' in a Deaf club. For example, in following Dawn around with my camera, we repeatedly passed a group of four hearing girls in the youth club, shown standing on the right in photograph 67. Although I was at the time of recording aware that these girls are hearing simply because they were speaking to each other, I did not pay conscious visual attention to them in the framing of the photographs. However, what strikes me now in viewing the photographs is the arrangement of their bodies: the four girls stay close together (which signers needing signing space will not often do) and right beside each other (whereas Deaf people would prefer positions in which they can clearly see each other, such as a circle). In addition, although the furthest-away girl is signing to a Deaf girl facing them, on the whole the group gives off an air of inaccessibility, in part evidenced by the nearest girl holding her arms crossed, an almost defensive arrangement which wards off signed interaction and which I saw in few photographs of Deaf people. These photographs illustrate how hearing people are visually identifiable in the context of the Deaf club; as their signing skills develop (and interaction with Deaf people increases) such typically hearing demeanour will undoubtedly fade. In any case, the point here is threefold. Firstly, to some extent my camera fulfilled the same purpose as the demeanour shown in these photographs, and as a hearing person in the Deaf club I could associate with the four girls' sense of social disorientation. Secondly, the photographs shown highlight a relevant visual element of life in the Deaf club which would be less likely to surface quite so clearly in verbal modes of investigation. And finally, despite my outsider status it is possible to photographically record meaningful, visual phenomena in the social space of the Deaf club.

Another reason I 'got' so little of all the conversations that were going on clearly visible all around me is that I was concentrating on the person I was photographing and what I judged to be part of his or her direct environment. Unfortunately the limited field of view provided in the viewfinder hides part of the 'perceptual field' which allows an observer to get a complete idea of the surroundings. The perceptual field is further fragmented because electronic wizzardry projects continuous information on camera settings and available light into various corners of the finder frame, and to this extent the act of photographing divorced me from fully engaging visually with my environment. Wielding a camera, one's focus is necessarily representational as well as experiential, since the viewfinder limits the field of view and therefore changes the context of what passes before one's eyes. The mirror in the camera provides its own Albertian window, and has the strong effect of disengaging the photographer from subject matter rather in the same way as watching people pass outside the window. Therefore my claim is not that 'I saw what the Deaf person saw'. That part of the visual perception of Deaf people is the topic of the next chapter.

The rest of this chapter will focus on the photographs themselves. The organisation of the material is not diachronically per person photographed, but rather follows a progression along the line of age. I chose this organisation because it highlights an important element of being Deaf: developing a particular visual awareness and being able to exploit it requires exposure to its diverse elements from as early an age as possible. If a child is born deaf, it is with rather more urgency that both visual awareness and skills in manipulating visual potential need to develop. I should like to stress that what is discussed here is only that which can be based on information in the photographs themselves. This means that there may well be many more identifiable pertinent visual elements in the environment of Deaf people, since only those that happened to be recorded receive attention here, but it also means that Deaf people may well be able to find evidence of many more pertinent visual strategies and other visual elements in the photographs presented here which I, being a hearing person, have not recognised or have overlooked. Unfortunately the project did not allow for extensive interviewing of Deaf people on the basis of the photographs here presented; this project is also in this sense strictly exploratory in nature. I gladly invite Deaf people to add, change and fill gaps.

Being a baby or a young child in the Deaf club

During one evening I photographed Michelle, a Deaf mother of two children, one a baby boy of around eight months, the other a girl of around three years old. Michelle and her children are regular visitors of the Deaf club, and they can always be found in the same room. According to British law, children are not allowed in bars where alcohol is for sale, so parents (mostly women) with young children instead socialise in a back-room adjacent to the bar. On several of my visits Michelle was the only adult in that room, but on this occasion there were plenty of Deaf people around in the room. The room has less light available than the other rooms in the building, and despite having raised the film, the available light made taking photographs difficult.

While Michelle conversed, during most of the evening, with Deaf people known to her, her baby spent part of the time on her lap, and part of the time on the floor, crawling around and playing with another toddler present. Although there were a few toys available to him, most often the toddlers played with cardboard beermats. Every so often Michelle would walk out of the room to the bar to get herself a drink, and although this upset the baby once, on the whole there were plenty of people around to divert his attention successfully while his mother was away. I spent most of the evening on the floor, taking photographs regularly of both Michelle and her children. Photographs 91–94 show a situation which was very typical, Michelle conversing with friends while having the baby on her lap. Whereas most often babies are held close to the chest, so that the mother can wrap her arms around the baby to shield it from falling, Michelle placed her baby further away from her chest, to create a signing space between herself and the baby. She regularly signed with one hand, so that the other could remain in contact with the baby. During the first sequence of twenty photographs I took of Michelle holding her baby this way, not a single one shows Michelle looking at her baby. This does not at all indicate a lack of interest on Michelle's behalf: she is taking part in a signed conversation which requires her visual attention. She is able to interact with her son by touch alone, which includes picking up a sock he was playing with and had dropped on the floor (photograph 95), putting her son on the floor, and giving him a bottle of water when he was seated on the floor. At no point during these activities did she appear to lose the thread of the conversation, and most of these activities took place without any visual attention. Only when her baby started to cry (because he could not find his dummy) did she look at him, find his dummy and give him another bottle, this time with milk (photograph 97).

During this sequence of events there was one moment where Michelle's baby pulled her hair in front of her face, thus blocking her access to the conversation (photograph 96); Michelle's immediate reaction was to put him on the floor rather than let him interrupt her access to the conversation. Other examples of caring without looking are shown in photographs 100 and 107–108, where Michelle changed his nappy in what must have been less than a couple of minutes, almost without looking. Instead she looked at a friend who had just entered the room and started to play with her daughter.

As the evening wore on and the baby became tired, Michelle held him on her lap and against her chest, signing with her arms in front of him. Presumably because this makes an important part of her signing space inaccessible, this arrangement did not last for very long—I have only two photographs (109–110). Some of the last photographs are of the baby seated on Michelle's knees (the end of her lap), facing her while she is signing to someone across the room with one hand and holding him with the other (photographs 111–112).

Getting your mother's undivided attention

Although Michelle's baby showed little enterprise in getting his mother's undivided attention (there were plenty of interesting things going on in the room that seemed of interest to him), it seems to me that pulling your mother's hair is a fine way of getting her attention.

Michelle's daughter, a few years older than her son, already has developed more 'mature' and effective means to draw her mother's attention. Most of these are pointing actions, to draw her mother's attention to something going on elsewhere in the room that she wants her mother to notice (photograph 98) including my presence (photograph 101), and a loose shoe-lace (photograph 99). If pointing does not work, one can always resort to the more urgent use of touch, in this case to choreograph the right moment for the photographer (photographs 103–105).

Similarly, when your mother does not want you to leave the room, your mother can use the same pointing function to clarify the situation (photograph 106).

A baby's first hearing aids

In the preceding discussion I never mentioned whether the baby boy is hearing or deaf—I don't know, since I never asked his mother. Another toddler, however, appears in the data set. When I was photographing Dawn, she spent some time conversing in the room with the mothers and young children, and at the time a toddler was rather shakily walking about in the room. Initially he was wearing hearing aids, which immediately and visually identifies him as deaf, but also as Deaf to most of the people around him. Deaf people will enquire after the audiological status of young children without making qualitative statements on the basis of the outcome of the query. Deaf adults may choose not to wear hearing aids (as indeed is the case in the majority of photographs presented here), often simply because they do not 'aid' or feel awkward, but on occasion also out of political reasons, when hearing aids are perceived to be the 'chains' of Deaf people, binding them to audiological status, making them recognisably deaf and maybe even reminding them of a frustrating period of education focusing on spoken language abilities. To this extent hearing aids have a visual quality extending beyond merely indicating hearing loss, up to the point where wearing hearing aids can be interpreted as constituting social or cultural weakness or disengagement; in other words, hearing aids can become both symbolic icons of the impositions of a hearing community, and indicators of a deaf person's attitudes as a Deaf person. There may therefore be a grim satisfaction in Dawn's expression when she signs that the toddler is knocking the aids out of his ears halfway through the evening (photographs 62–65) which identifies Dawn's political allegiance to Deaf people in the room. From the last photograph, which is out of focus because the toddler was less than thirty centimetres away from the lens, it would seem that he is indeed happier without them.

Hearing children in the Deaf club

I 'met' Michelle's daughter before I met Michelle, since she was very interested in the presence of a camera while I was photographing Charles (photographs 39–40). She would place herself squarely in front of the camera, and then move closer, right up to the lens. To me it was clear that she was both posing and at the same time unsure about the effects this would have. After I had taken these initial photographs of her, I handed her the camera and showed her the room through it, but she declined to take any pictures with it; I think the size and weight put her off playing with it. She handed it back to me and urged me to take pictures of her. When she realised she was no longer 'of interest' to me, she left. But every time we met, she seemed intrigued with the camera, so I asked Michelle if I could take photographs of her. Michelle's daughter was clearly pleased with this arrangement, and repeatedly attracted her mother's attention to me so that I could take a photograph of her and her mother together (photographs 103–105). At no point during these interactions between Michelle's daughter and myself did she speak. In fact, speaking to her seemed to make her shy, so I quickly stopped talking to her. Once or twice she evidently was stuck for a play-mate, and if I was at hand she would impose on me for a bit, trying to get my undivided attention by using the same attention getting strategies she uses with her mother, such as waving, pointing and tapping on knees or shoulder. She was completely at home with some Deaf people: a Deaf young woman called Helen seemed to be her favourite and she signed without inhibition and with full concentration to her. It is in the behaviour of Michelle's daughter that there is evidence for the potential of hearing children growing up Deaf. Her language preference at this point in her life, before English language focused education kicks in, is clearly for BSL, and she is fully conversant with habits in the Deaf community, such as visual attention getting strategies, looking at her mother when she is seeking information or checking where her mother's attention is directed to, and is equally aware that her mother can not call her to attention if she simply refuses to look at her, invoking a rare occasional shout from her mother in response. Clearly, certain visual elements of Deaf people's social space are unconsciously exploited by Michelle's hearing daughter, and the Deaf club provides both a playground in which and playmates with whom exploitation of such visual elements can be practised and built upon.

However, two other hearing children were also regularly present in the Deaf club, and they showed almost the exact opposite of the attitude shown by Michelle's daughter. Being probably around ten years of age, the crucial factor may well be the amount of education in a hearing environment they have had access to by that age. These two children invariably came to the club with their father who is Deaf. I was told by one of them that their mother is also deaf (maybe they also meant Deaf) but that she mostly worked on Sunday evenings. In fact, both showed their disgruntlement over the fact that their mother seemed to work "almost always". I have very few photographs of those children for two reasons. The first is that I concentrated on individual Deaf people, so I only took photographs of the children when they somehow became part of that person's environment. That did not happen very often, because the children mostly stuck to themselves, out of the way on the staircase or near the t.v. in a corner of the youth club. Both, probably far from incidentally, had the effect of reducing the need for them to interact with Deaf people, that is, to sign. They showed, in contrast with Michelle's daughter, no hesitation in speaking to me. In fact, they were positively shy of signing in front of me although they were both fluent signers when forced to sign in response to Deaf people's attention. Mostly however, Deaf people ignored them, and if there was interaction they were often teased a little, such as when the boy bought a Mars-bar and Charles, who was standing behind the counter in the youth club, took both the Mars-bar and the money from him (photograph 34).

The second reason I have few photographs of the children was that they were distinctly camera-shy. They would often run out of the room when I showed up, and only allowed me to take photographs when they were occupied in some activity, mostly buying snacks. Their father would give them money for snacks regularly (maybe to keep them out of his way), but because they were not allowed in the bar they would have to wait for him to come out before they could ask him for money for crisps or a coke. On occasion they would resort to asking (in fluent BSL) a Deaf person going into the bar to tap their dad on the shoulder for them while there. With the obtained money they showed up regularly at a side entrance to the bar in the main hall way, and waited patiently to draw the attention of the Deaf people serving behind the bar (photographs 123–124, 128–129). Without a doubt they have the same knowledge of visual elements and attention getting strategies as Michelle's daughter, but on no occasion did I catch them exploiting those elements: they apparently rather waited than waved, as shown also by another hearing boy their age (photographs 130–132), who waited for at least ten minutes for a packet of crisps without moving a muscle.

These hearing children were clearly bored silly in the Deaf club. Avoiding Deaf people and not being allowed in the bar, there was little else for them to do than hang around the staircase (where I could only take photographs of them if something else was distracting them) or watch the television in the youth club, which was sometimes fitted with a video-game by Charles. On one occasion the children asked me to take photographs of their dad, but when I approached him obligingly with the invitation their father declined.

Taking a stake in the Deaf club

Signs of status

The data set sports a number of young Deaf people who have taken on responsibilities in relation to Deaf club functions. None of these responsibilities were ever discussed with me, but activities in relation to them regularly took place in my presence. In the case of Charles, responsibilities were strictly in relation to the youth club. The evening he had selected for me to photograph him started off with Charles opening the youth club (photographs 28–29). These photographs show something I noticed particularly with Charles but which also shows up elsewhere, namely that he often walks around with keys and bits of paper, which he manages to keep in his hands while opening doors (photograph 35) and while signing (photographs 36, 42, 46); however, they are invariably put down when he sits down to chat. He shares this characteristic with Dawn, another Deaf person with club responsibilities (photographs 51–54) and with his brother Francis, who is a youth club leader (photographs 55-56, 59-60). Apart from Deaf persons occasionally going round with raffle tickets (photograph 37), they were the only ones more often than not carrying around pieces of paper and keys. It occasionally results in displays of rather impressive grasping skills, such as when Dawn brings Charles a drink, stretching out a hand which, besides a full glass, also carries her keys (photograph 38). That same photograph also shows exaggerated tongue protrusion which can be made as part of (or here instead of) the common sign for thank you, which in its most common form includes less spectacular mouthing of the 'th' of 'thanks'.

Although it is in itself of course wholly unremarkable that people should walk round with such ordinary items in their hands as envelopes and notepads, it becomes noticeable in the context of the Deaf club for three reasons. The first one is that it prohibits signing, and often sign language tutors will tell you (as mine did) that it is considered rude to sign while holding items: you are supposed to put them down, and it is in this respect considered much like speaking with your mouth full by some Deaf people. Secondly, since BSL has no written form, writing is normally in English, and written documents are likely to carry overtones of oral education and struggles with English literacy in schooling environments, particularly in the minds of older members in the Deaf club, who received their education in a period less responsive to the bilingual nature of the educational needs of BSL users. And thirdly, most of the time—and most notably with Charles—there did not appear to be a good reason to carry around these things, for he did nothing with them. Rather, it would seem that what matters to a degree is to be seen with keys or pieces of paper which come with such club responsibilities as carried out, with apparent dedication, by

Charles, Dawn and Francis. There is some support for this notion of wanting to be seen with such items in their selection of 'favourite' photographs. Charles' most favourite (out of four) is photograph 32, showing him and Dawn dealing with correspondence from the BDA and his second most favourite photograph shows him in isolation, signing to someone out of the frame with a piece of paper in one hand (photograph 36). Dawn's most favourite photograph shows her by herself in her office manipulating large sheets of flipchart paper (photograph 49) and her third most favourite photograph (58) shows her studying a written item with Francis, who is himself holding a note-pad. I believe there are (again) two separate reasons that sustain these observations. The first is related to the status that fluency in English literacy may hold in quarters of the Deaf community. It is often claimed that literacy skills among the d/Deaf population sre lower than the standard in wider society (e.g. Myklebust 1969, Conrad 1979, 1981). Since most administrative responsibilities will require such skills, one might expect that status might be derived from it. And secondly, all three are youngsters aware of and devoted to Deaf causes and the role of the Deaf club in the lives of Deaf people, and they prove an asset to the club in terms of their abilities and enthusiasm. They in turn develop necessary future (professional) skills within a sympathetic Deaf club environment, and gain status within the local Deaf community in their roles as active organisers in the running of the club. The administration which comes with these activities means they are regularly seen with wards of paper and writing implements, which also serve to provide a 'look' to that status of responsible person, and I believe occasionally such material items are exploited in their visual presence for that reason. The photographs, I feel, support the relevance of the observation, but my interpretation requires confirmation which can only be obtained responsibly through a more detailed analysis of the relation structures within the Deaf club on the basis of interviews with a large number of Deaf people frequenting the club. My interpretation here is tentative and inconclusive.

Written documents and visual records

Apart from the use Charles, Dawn and Francis made of documents such as letters and notepads little reference was made in the Deaf club to written information or documentation. There is a notice-board in the bar area which is kept up to date and another one on the wall of the staircase with information of a more general type, but as in most cases with notice-boards, they seem to be generally ignored. The notice-board in the bar area occasionally served as Bingo score-sheet pad (photograph 5). There also are obligatory price-lists and messages of various kinds behind the bar (photograph 113), which includes an 'oversized cheque' made out to the Deaf club the previous year (photograph 125) for £850. This visual reference to a charitable type act is repeated by another oversized cheque in the games room in the basement (photograph 18) and as the man, who was posing on his own initiative and inviting a photograph indicates, there is a certain pride associated with these cheques. This is reflected also in the attention paid to the public presentation of such cheques in *the British Deaf News* (chapter 7).

There is only one single instance where I found a Deaf person reading (photograph 61)—aside from a Deaf-blind person who visited the Deaf club regularly and who always brought material (in braille) to read. That is to say, he was looking through *the British Deaf News*, the periodical produced by the British Deaf Association and the only magazine I found copies of in the Deaf club. On one occasion a leaflet containing information on the 'Great North Swim' was the subject of a long discussion between two Deaf people who were confused by the leaflet (photographs 119–122). The two people serving behind the bar joined the discussion, and a photograph in this sequence was selected by Iris, the woman behind the bar, as her most favourite in the set.

This can be contrasted with the relative ubiquity of photographs in the Deaf club. Snapshot photographs were handed round regularly (photographs 1, 126–127) and a Deaf woman, learning that I am from the Netherlands, arranged to see me the week after to show me some photographs of her Dutch friends. During my outing with the youth club, elaborate video recordings were made throughout the day by Francis' father, and some of that was *mise-en-scene* purposefully and carefully orchestrated. There was a stint of highly formalised photograph-taking of the entire youth club in front of an aeroplane which lasted a long time and was performed very seriously and smoothly, without the need for much advance discussion or rallying round (photographs 14–16). This kind of associative memento recording is an equally strong feature of the pages of *the British Deaf News* (chapter 7). The games room of the Deaf club served as a repository of such kinds of photographs of club activities and group posing (photographs 72–73, 78, 83) and they were regularly consulted while people were there (photograph 84). Similarly, and to my relief, my own photographs seemed to be well received and were shown around and discussed (79, 90, 102, 116–118).

Exploiting architecture

There are contrasts among young Deaf people such as Charles, Dawn, Francis and Helen in that their interests and involvements take them to various areas of the Deaf club. The available rooms in the Deaf club are each open to specific, located activities. For example, one room houses the youth club, another is open to parents with children, and in another room is the bar in which the bingo is being played.

On the evening I took photographs of Charles, the youth club was particularly empty (photographs 31, 33), and even the goods in store seemed to copy that absence (photograph 30). That evening Charles closed the youth club early and found more scope for socialising on the first floor in the room opposite the bar. This room has its own bar but this is more often than not closed, maybe to provide a more suitable setting for the children and their parents who are generally to be found in the back of that room. However, this particular evening it was open (photograph 41), probably because of the number of people present. Charles spent most of the evening there, interacting with many different people over greater distances than would normally occur in a crowded bar between hearing people (photograph 44). Before he left, he spent some time in discussion with his brother between the rooms on the stairs (photographs 46–47). This staircase can itself turn into a venue of its own right, as happened when I photographed Helen (135–136) and for a while the separation between the two bars seemed to have been overcome by an open-door policy (photograph 137). In fact, the architectural layout of the building, with its central staircase and fire doors (obligatory around staircases in public access buildings) meant that these doors, which are supposed to remain shut, are regularly kept open so as to enable people to keep in contact with events (photographs 82, 85). Yet closed doors do not hamper communication, and occasionally people would stand on opposite sides while signing to each other (photographs 6–7, 45) or even posing for me (photograph 86).

Dawn and Helen similarly moved fluently between groups, rooms and functions. Dawn's evening started with a meeting which also included Francis, Charles and the Chairman of the Deaf club (photograph 48). She then spent some time in the youth club, where there were a few more people present and a now well-stocked cupboard (photograph 50), but spent an equal amount of time in the back room with parents and toddlers or in the bar conversing to older members (photograph 66) and ended the evening chasing Charles around in horseplay (photographs 68–71). Both Charles and Dawn were also present during an 'official' snooker match in the basement of the Deaf club. Horseplay occurred there too between Charles and Jimmy, my photographic subject of that evening (photographs 75–77), and it often occurred in the context of the presence of a camera (photograph 74). What strikes me is not that this sort of behaviour goes on—after all, one would expect this behaviour in comparable venues such as pubs or working men's clubs—but that it is continuing without hesitation in the presence of a camera, and moreover that the camera is exploited effortlessly as a resource of humour in a way that seemed to me fluent and spontaneous, so that I would regularly take a photograph without quite realising that what I saw in the viewfinder was no longer a 'natural' but a staged event. Jimmy especially was quick in using my presence, as when he snatched at random a prize goblet from the bar and placed himself next to Francis, who fell into his part equally naturally (photograph 81). As with the example of the posing with the oversized cheque, there is a humouristic exploitation of a kind of posing which is actually quite common for example within the pages of *the British DeafNews*. In a similar vein, a prize goblet (photographs 114–115) was filled with beer and unceremoniously emptied by a Deaf person without anyone commenting in surprise while I was photographing Iris. What is ridiculed is a collective experience of representation, the regularly featured showing off of prizes, diplomas and oversized cheques in notably *the British DeafNews*, and this exploitation of humour is shared by the younger members in the Deaf club. While taking photographs of Lawrence, a middle-aged Deaf member, he and a group of club dart-throwers took on a pose in the basement against the backdrop of the dartboard. Although the men are all smiling, there is a definite undertone of seriousness. This posing is a much less humorous exploitation of a collective form of representation than it is engaging in that form of representation itself. Since there was not actually a match going on, every person in turn 'acted' throwing the darts for the purpose of the camera (although I had not invited them to). Having finished his turn, each person again posed very precisely, and notably in each case with all darts thrown in the place with the highest score (photographs 19–21). Although none of them looked at the camera, as is usual in this kind of posing, instead suggesting I happened to take a photograph at the moment the darts were pulled out of the board, all held the pose until I indicated having taken a photograph. Here once more is a fluent interaction with a camera and a photographer, and a confident and precise orchestration of what the photograph will show without the need for discussion or verbal agreement.

The bingo evening of Mr. Phillips

Mr. Phillips has been frequenting the Deaf club for as long as he cares to remember. He now comes every other week with his wife and her friend, arriving in time for the bingo and leaving an hour after it finishes. Mr. Phillips showed an equally natural propensity towards the camera, choosing as one of his favourite photographs a portrait I took halfway during the bingo session (photograph 3). All his evenings at the Deaf club are spent in the same place, surrounded by the same people (photograph 11). In fact, at that side of the room faces rarely change. The bingo itself is taken very seriously by all involved (photographs 2, 4) and walking through the room during bingo does not occur. The mother and father of Francis and Charles also take part (photographs 22–23) and after the bingo many Deaf people come round to sign to them. Meanwhile Mr. Phillips never left his seat, and spends most of the time watching the conversation of others. For a while he conversed with me on football (of which I know little) and he signed with great relish about a match he had seen on t.v., but unfortunately, despite a great deal of iconic representation in his signing, I lost the thread of his account halfway through.

It is clear that this room, at least for part of the evening, serves as a more traditional venue for a very large group of members of the Deaf club who come there out of life-long habit, and their needs are being met mainly through regular attendance of the religious service which takes place in BSL in a chapel on the ground floor[1], weekly bingo-sessions, and the socialising that goes on afterwards and which occurs typically with other Deaf people they have known for a long time. Mostly younger members do not frequent the room other than for fetching a drink from the bar, although they will often hang around for a bit chatting to people there.

I suspect that a person of the age of Mr. Phillips (he must be nearing eighty) develops different strategies for coping with perceptual needs. For example, Mr. Phillips left much of the looking around to his wife, who often would relate the essentials of what was going on in the room to him with a minimum of signing, and occasionally he seemed to switch off entirely (photograph 8). Mr. Phillips was also one of the few Deaf persons whom I saw crossing his arms (photographs 9–10) and this kind of 'switching off' from signing happened notably when he seemed focused on his companions, his wife and her friend. It seems that his visual field contains more than one 'horizon', the furthest one being the man behind the bingo machine, signing the bingo numbers at the far end of the room. This horizon makes available all that could be of interest, the bingo itself, people walking to and fro, the conversation of friends at the adjacent tables and the conversation immediately around him. Then there is another horizon a little nearer, located at the people seated around the tables adjacent to him, who all seemed to be long-time friends in the Deaf club, and maybe even people he had been to school with at the Northern Counties Deaf School in Newcastle upon Tyne. Then there is the horizon of his own table, where there are only close family members, and the nearest is his wife, seated not next to but opposite him, and who occasionally served to relay information which was outside the nearest horizons. The strategic placement of the seat occupied by Mr. Phillips in the room is uncanny (see figure 5.1 overleaf).

From where he sits, the visual bustle of the bar is cut out by the screen on his right. Anyone walking into the room has to pass by him, but without interrupting his visual access to any of his company or the bingo man. From his position, Mr. Phillips has achieved maximum economy of the visual strategies required to communicate with his environment. It therefore seems no coincidence that most people of roughly his generation occupy that entire side of the room. In such an atmosphere there is much less scope for events which are perceptually unorchestrated or a-

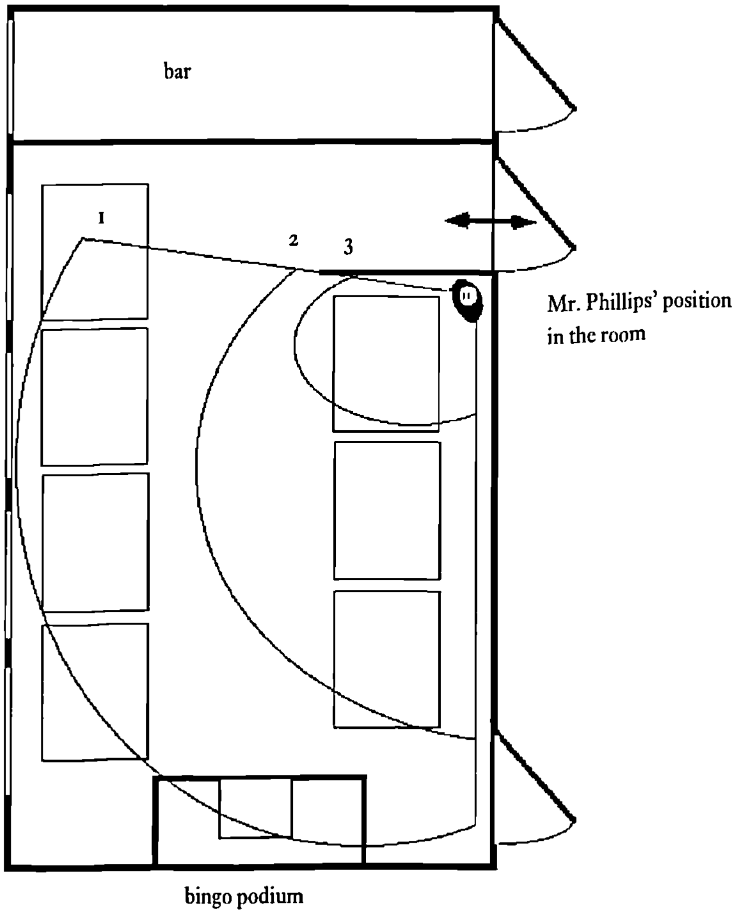


Figure 5.1
Horizonal extensions of Mr. Phillips' view in the Deaf club.

typical within the context of what takes place, and so it seems that the need for visual economy organises the social space of that room. Although the idea of a graded horizon is being brought forward in this study, the idea of space as socially organised is itself not a new one. Aside from such contexts as gardening and landscaping in which discussions of 'panoramas' or 'vistas' and their meanings are more common, the historian Lowe wrote in the context of a study on bourgeois perception that:

> "Spatiality as a lived, humanly oriented space is a perceptual, horizonal extension. It is more fundamental than any objective, measurable space. Yet it is not just personal and private, but intersubjective. Society provides for certain symbols and institutions to provide spatial orientation, within which perceptual connections then become possible. In any period, there are a variety of spatial organizations, providing for different, complementary perceptual prospects." (Lowe 1982:59)

It appears that in the context of this Deaf club, there is an important generational difference in spatial orientation, one in which space is fluid and crowded with orientations, and one in which space is organised and visual 'noise' minimised.

Even the spontaneity of posing was achieved only once during the evening I photographed Mr. Phillips (photograph 13), when people were getting ready to go home. But the photograph is again different in expressive quality than the photographs discussed earlier. In this case, the posing is entirely unpretentious, it is a candid act, and a clearly and genuinely shared and enjoyed experience for both. Yet neither of the two people posing here asked for copies of the photograph: it was the moment of association and the attention paid to it by a photographer that seemed to matter. My role was to provide the occasion of the photograph, and even more to witness rather than to record for posterity, and the posing simply rolled naturally out of what had begun as a greeting (photograph 12). Here, as in all the other examples, Deaf people are posing for a complete stranger, a hearing person whom they might distrust in many respects, yet in the posing it appears as if they have known me for a long time: there is complete trust in the attentions of the photographer. By comparison, many other documentary photographers have to spend a long time in most communities they want to record before people will accept and tolerate the presence and intrusions of a camera (Aron 1979). These Deaf people, on the other hand, seem to interact not with the photographer but directly with the camera, with a form of representation which is accepted as a conventional and common collective resource of association, and as the examples of the humourous exploitation of 'typical' portrayal shows, Deaf people often have a kind of control over their presentation which occasionally made me feel I was a passive audience watching the unfolding of a staged event rather than actively 'taking' photographs: as a play on Kodak's famous slogan, I pressed the button, Deaf people did the rest.

BSL and Sign: Mrs. Phillips

Mrs. Phillips did not, in her own opinion, communicate to her husband, or to anyone else for that matter, in BSL. As she explained to me in a combination of signing and voicing, Deaf people like herself (hinting at her educational background at St. John's in Boston Spa, a school for deaf children[2] with traditionally strong oral association) do not use BSL, which is regarded as being "for hearing people". This explanation was accompanied by a pointing gesture to a BSL tutor who was chatting to a hearing person I knew from a recent sign language course, and a scathing remark addressed at both BSL tutors, a relatively new professional occupation of some Deaf visitors tothe club, and their hearing students. In Mrs. Phillips' opinion, BSL tutors are not really (or no longer) to be looked upon as 'Deaf' and their students are clearly misguided; in short, she does not regard people paying attention to BSL very highly. Such an interpretation of the status of BSL is not uncommon within the Deaf community, and Mrs. Phillips refers to her own mode of communication simply as 'Sign'. When I reminded her that my own signing skills had developed to a degree through attending courses in BSL, she assured me brusquely and without hesitation that I was different—I am not sure whether that is meant as a compliment or whether that remark too carries some hidden meaning.

I would hesitate, nevertheless, to relegate Mrs. Phillips' distinction between BSL and Sign to a simple confusion of labels. Rather, I am struck by the possibility of the idea that, although there is certainly a substantial political element involved (which leads Mrs. Phillips to hold BSL tutors in low esteem in the context of the Deaf club), it may well be that what Mrs. Phillips discriminates between is her experience of her own communication and that what is said, claimed, written and taught about with reference to BSL. Not that these claims are false; to the contrary, sign linguistic descriptions of BSL address in great detail the language that Mrs. Phillips herself is using.

But my suggestion is that descriptions involving the label of BSL may to someone like Mrs. Phillips not be comprehensive enough. For example, part of what is taught in the BSL curriculum pertains to the attention getting strategies used by Deaf people. This would not normally form part of any spoken language course, and in BSL teaching it constitutes therefore an addition to that which is taught. It is often subsumed under 'information on the community' and it is as such part of the CACDP BSL examinations.[3] But rather than merely being part of an appendixed body of knowledge for successful partaking in Deaf community life, such elements (often visual in nature) are absolutely central in a social space which is accessed and created by the visual perception habits of Deaf people, and they are seamlessly integrated with language itself. I suggest that Mrs. Phillips' understanding of Sign may make such a distinction, in which BSL is perceived as a less embracing and less personal, 'hearing' understanding of the language, whereas Sign is used to refer to something more personal and self-defining, as well as being a reference to a practice which is more comprehensive, which includes BSL but also includes visual strategies, perceptual habits (collective vision) and Deaf experience. It seems to me to represent a view of language beyond the remit of what sign linguistics and language education are conventionally able to address or reflect. Although Padden and Humphries do not consider the idea I have set out here, they have found similar refusal of proposed labels. They note that:

> "There are several possible names for the entire activity of signing, and the choice one makes among them depends not only on what type of activity one is referring to but also on its social and political implications." (Padden and Humphries 1988:72)

My interpretation of what Sign might mean to those Deaf people who refer to their own form of communication by that label could easily be incorporated into this statement. The research on conversation analysis discussed in chapter 1 suggests that there are ways to explore such a wider notion of language, as perhaps does this study in the context of visual sociology.

Access to communication

The Deaf-blind person shown in photograph 134 is also a regular visitor to the Deaf club, and the evening I was photographing Helen she had come along too. I had seen Helen converse with her before and I have not managed to capture the ease with which conversation flows with a still camera. The Deaf-blind person is undoubtedly wholly part of the community, and differs from most hearing people frequenting the Deaf club in that she is probably less disabled in her access to communication: because of her experience, an eagerness for interaction not always witnessed in hearing people, and probably her attitudes towards other Deaf people she is less segregated from other Deaf people. She has as many Deaf people coming to her for conversation as she has interests, and if people leave her for a while she turns to reading, and always making sure to have reading material with her—it is in this respect that she differs from other Deaf people socially. In her case, some older Deaf people will come over from the bar to see her, and at the end of her stay she is duly escorted to the door (photograph 138). Within the context of the arguments presented in this study, one might have imagined that a Deaf-blind person would end up in a lonely corner of the room, and that my suggestion that she is a member of the Deaf community is contradictory, but neither is the case. She is drawn to the Deaf club by needs which she shares with Deaf people there, and her mode of communication is, although haptic rather than perceptual, very similar: it is not the case that communication only constitutes finger-spelling on the hand. In signing to her, many signs are made haptically against her body, which in the case of the seeing Deaf person requires great imaginative skill in manipulating the projection of signs. In this case, communicating with the Deaf-blind person exploits the cognitive abilities shared by many Deaf people as well as abilities developed by Deaf-blind people themselves.

A less regular visitor is a Deaf wheelchair user, seen here engaged in deep conversation with the Deaf-blind person (photograph 80). Access for this person is far from ideal as he has to be carried up and down the stairs on arrival and departure (photographs 88–89). Being an able BSL user, his status in the context of the Deaf club is less conspicuous than that of some of the hearing people like myself and the four girls discussed at the beginning of the chapter. He was however an infrequent visitor, and undoubtedly the limitations of access are partly to blame for that.

One or two hearing people quickly develop the knack of socialising through the use of BSL, no matter how limited their fluency. Photograph 24 shows an introductory-level BSL student having a chat with Mrs. Murphy. However, after a while the conversation dried up, and Mrs. Murphy inoffensively but decidedly turned away towards a conversation her husband was having further along the table (photograph 27). In the environment of the Deaf club, the language learner is the most disabled person, and is regularly ignored by Deaf people.

A sign language environment is a difficult one for a BSL learner to come to grips with, in part out of sheer visual considerations. Sign language production is a matter of learning, but to learn to perceive signing is a slower process which, because of its perceptual requirements, is very different from spoken language learning experience. It is not easy to follow even slow signing in the beginning, even when it is signed in the visually 'quiet' surroundings of a classroom by a clearly visible teacher or fellow student. To move from that clearly defined and contextualised, learner-focused situation to the Deaf club is a bit like learning a language in a crowded bar. Not only is signing often very much faster than what was practised, the signing will of course be different from that of the tutor, and it is going on everywhere in all directions all the time—just like talk in a bar . On occasion I found myself seated or standing between, next to, or in the midst of signed conversation, or accidentally stumbling right through the perceptual crossfires of people's attention to the signing going on. This has the result shown in photographs like 87, being in the middle of various conversations, 25, not knowing who is conversing with who here, 26, being next to various conversations going on, or 133, sorting out when it is my turn to order a drink, which proved easy enough for Lawrence from a great distance (photograph 17). Deaf people are also able to draw the attention of somebody in one room to somebody in another room by a pointing action via different people (photograph 43), which adds another example to those offered throughout this chapter of the visual strategies that are available to Deaf people for organising the visual bustle of life in the Deaf club. Photographs like these presented here form clear visual support for Carol Erting's idea that organising perceptual strategies must be involved if Deaf people are to make sense of such a persistent onslaught of visual information.

The idea of scopic social space

My descriptions so far have offered information on the visual social space of the Deaf club in relation to very different aspects of visual perception and from varying viewpoints, namely those of both d/Deaf and hearing children, Deaf youngsters and an older Deaf generation, and that of myself. The first section on babies and toddlers provided some visual information on a Deaf social environment, on the ways a mother holds her infants and attracts their attention, and how children themselves might manipulate a social environment in which people are commonly Deaf. The next section focused much more closely on a social interpretation based on visual information available in the photographs, in discussing the presence and use of chiro- and photo-graphic documents by Deaf people. Then followed a move to older Deaf people, finding a difference between Deaf youngsters who were actively moving about and older members who come to the Deaf club for a particular event in a particular location. I suggested that older Deaf people like Mr. Phillips develop a perceptual efficiency based on an organisation of space and particular strategies of paying visual attention. Then followed a short account of how confusing the club can be to a hearing outsider with limited language skills, and how the social life in the Deaf club 'becomes available' by developing not only language skills but also some strategies (similar to those of Deaf people) for coping with the apparent visual confusion of a social environment in which meaning can only be created and accessed through visual perception. As I suggested, this would constitute a move from using BSL to using Sign in Mrs. Phillips' terminology. And finally, carrying on through these sections, were descriptions of different attitudes towards posing, and the differing results that were anticipated by acts of posing.

There is however, more than one common element in these discussions. All the descriptions deal with visual perception, the perceiving of environment, and they centre on a particular aggregate of people, people who are Deaf. The descriptions also all deal with social aspects of that environment, ways in which people share or do not share perceptions of that environment or visual approaches to it collectively. And finally, all of the environment is also a context, that of a Deaf club, which offers its own distinct range of activities and events.

In bringing these descriptions together the idea of the Deaf club being a scopic social space is suggested, in the sense that what provides at least superficial access to the community present in the club, in addition to some mastery of the visual/gestural language, is a basic minimum of visual skill, which has become necessary because for many of the members of the Deaf community information presented in visual modes (signing, or pictorial representation) is the single most important source for world-making, and visual perception is the mode in which the majority of people in the Deaf community have access to language. The only way in which such visual skills can develop in the Deaf community is through socialisation processes, often started at birth in the case of the children of Deaf parents who bring their babies, be they hearing or deaf, with them to the Deaf club. But equally, adult people may begin to frequent the Deaf club and undertake to develop a visual understanding of the club as social space by developing strategies which allow them to 'cope' first and later to organise and exploit, the large amount of visual information afforded within the varying social contexts of the club. As I described as part of my own experience, knowledge of (even fluency in) BSL is itself not enough to be able fully to access the information presented in the 'visual field' of the Deaf club. What a hearing person needs to develop are ways to organise an unprecedented amount of information in the perceptual domain, presented in a visual field which is framed by the Deaf club as a social space. One can speculate that for hearing people access initially would be easier around older Deaf people where both activities and social space are more organised in terms of an economy of minimal visual distraction and optimum ability to focus on singular, clearly sequenced events, which would help to explain why hearing people were more regularly present in that room, despite the fact that older Deaf people often use more fingerspelling, which is very hard to 'read' by inexperienced hearing BSL learners, and despite older Deaf people occasionally using anachronistic signs.

However, if this were all there was to it, the community would be a visual rather than a scopic one. But between people who have grown up with such access to and mastery over the sheer amount of visual information present in Deaf club activities, there has developed a collective vision as well as neurologically adapted cognitive functions, which together offer both particular abilities in relation to vision and a shared understanding of how vision can be exploited and visual information presented and accessed. This collective vision is also cultural in that it is essentially creative, which is witnessed in the 'takes' on such performances as posing for and photographing of the presentation of prizes. But it is also witnessed outside graphic representation, for example in the visually patterned and perceptually rhythmic organisations of sign poetry.[4] These performances are often presented at a kind of interface between symbolic description and iconic depiction, between language and visual representation. This also illustrates how this collective vision can contain functional and often symbolic meaning within the community. Examples of the last observation are the spectacular symbolic of (not) wearing hearing aids, the framing of oversized cheques as adornments on the walls in the Deaf club, and the ritual of posing for group photographs which accompany almost any activity organised as part of life in the Deaf club.

Although the suggestion of the Deaf club as a scopic social space might seem a radical departure from more conventional descriptions of the place of such clubs in the lives of Deaf people (which have focused more on processes of socialisation, community needs and community cohesiveness), I think it is only so in the way I have exploited a certain discourse. There is actually a relatively small move involved in suggesting that visual themes organise Deaf people's lives—as Carol Erting did (1987; see chapter 1)—to suggesting, as I do here, that these themes present a collective vision, a cultural resource and a basis for organising social spaces such as Deaf clubs. Within the context of a visual sociology, my observations on the visual themes in Deaf people's lives (including neurological adaptations in relation to visual perception), and current postmodern discussions on the topic of the cultural determination of visual perception as treated in the first four chapters, the suggestion that Deaf clubs are essentially scopic social spaces is a logical extension to thinking about vision in relation to Deaf people, resulting entirely from a radically altered approach to Deaf Studies. This line of thinking is furthermore wholly in keeping with the logic of focusing on the exploitation of ability, rather than on what Deaf people are not able to do.

collective vision and representation: responding to a camera

The photography and the presence of a camera in the Deaf club have presented the opportunity for a unique argumentation in relation to collective vision. As I have indicated, the interactions of Deaf people with myself as a photographing subject—and someone who did not do very much else—were fluent in ways I have not encountered before. This comes to the fore most strongly in the different qualities of the posing that I encountered during my evening sessions, but also more generally in the quality of the interactions with the camera. The responses ranged from calm and unassuming acceptance by Mr. Phillips to very definite engaged interaction with high affect by Jimmy, but never did the presence of the camera seem to affect their behaviour towards other people present in the Deaf club, nor did the camera make them in any way coy or boastful. Considering the sheer persistence with which I doggedly followed them around holding a camera often at less than fifty centimetres distance because of the focal construction of the wide-angle lens, I consider that to be a remarkable achievement. Of course there was the occasional horse-play, but that was always engaged in whole-heartedly and without reservations, and such horse-play equally took place when my presence was virtually forgotten, such as when Dawn chased Charles around the room and then engaged in a friendly wrestling match when they caught up with each other (photographs 68–71).

The only people who responded antagonistically to finding my camera pointing in their direction were hearing people, although quite a few Deaf people politely refused to be a subject for a whole evening.

The reasons Deaf people had for declining my invitation to be photographed were reasonable and conventional: one person did not want to be photographed because he is a relatively public figure, a well-known BSL tutor, who comes to the Deaf club for a good couple of drinks as well as social interaction. This person did not want to risk being portrayed as a 'boozer' by a hearing person he did not know during a time when he was possibly trying to forget about the trials and tribulations of teaching hearing people BSL. Some women, especially older women, declined to volunteer because they considered themselves too old, or not sufficiently appealing, to warrant the kind of attention they apparently associated with being photographed by a younger male, and some young Deaf women refused my request because they were obviously and understandably not convinced by what I presented as legitimate motivations. I must stress again that I did not try to persuade or object against the grounds of any refusal: I never insisted or persisted. On the whole it proved much more difficult for me to find as many female volunteers as male volunteers, and I was, much to my regret, unable to further explore such gender issues in the time I had available, or even to resolve unintended tension I might have caused by way of my invitations. Aside from such refusal, I was always entirely welcome, and only asked on one occasion to stop taking photographs. This happened while I was taking photographs of Iris who was serving behind the bar. In my opinion the man in question showed a generally bossy demeanour, and that evening he did not seem to be in a very good mood. After his request I looked at Iris so that she could present her opinion, and she resolved the issue by signing to him that I was taking photographs of her, not of him, and that I was quite welcome to do so.

The kind of fluency with which many people in front of the camera moved from being 'caught unawares' to purposeful posing I think is indicative of a relationship that Deaf people have with photographic representation which is based on more of an acceptance of the face-value validity of a photographic representation common in wider society. We are told so often that photographs are manipulations of truths, or that photographs are being used for ends not intended by those who posed for them, that more and more people, other than for family snapshots—or even in those cases—are increasingly reluctant to be photographed. Indeed, photojournalists in particular feel increasingly estranged from a public which regularly behaves aggressively towards them, albeit often for very good reasons. However, I found that in the Deaf club photographs were a common resource. They were often discussed, and the taking of photographs was in no way perceived as intruding on privacies, but rather as an appropriate form of documentation. That people are used to being recorded often is also shown in photographs 139–142, when Helen went upstairs into the youth club where someone had set up a video camera and three people, including Helen, took it in turns to sign information about the youth club onto tape. They were briefed by the large posters on the wall, but even so, it takes skill to sit down in front of a camera and sign to it fluently and unhesitantly. This fluent interaction with cameras, this being unimpressed with being recorded, or indeed a distinct exploitation of representation, I imagine to be the result of the uses that such representations have within the community, as well as being a result of 'oral' traditions such as the frequent story-telling done by Deaf people. Deaf people, wholly accommodating iconic information and depiction in their language, are conversant with the semiotics of depiction on a level which is undoubtedly exploited conventionally within the community. Perhaps an example outside photography can help to clarify this statement. During BSL classes, we were occasionally given simple drawings of people which we were supposed to identify in sign by communicating certain 'spectacular' aspects of their presentation. That is, a drawing might show a thin man with a bright chequered shirt, or a woman with a patterned blouse and ruffled skirt. To be able to convey such information is functional for example in pointing someone out in a crowd, but the exercise is mainly undertaken for the relationship of iconicity to signing: it is possible to iconically relate a particular item of clothing or a particular pattern to signs. Watching tutors copy information from the drawings into signed expressions, one gets the impression that it should be possible to discriminate (by variations on a single sign) between five men even if the only difference in their appearance is the width of the stripes on their shirts. It is this close relationship between that which is iconic-representational in graphic depictions and that which is exploited iconically in the language which is at the basis of the conventional status of photographs in the Deaf community. In this sense photographic representations have a common status and power of representation within the Deaf community to an extent not afforded to written text.

It should also be clear, then, that photographic records are of particular importance to the Deaf community. There have been various plans in the making to organise libraries of photographs which go back to earlier uses of cameras, for example at Northern Counties School for the Deaf in Newcastle, which also produces regular news bulletins that are often highly illustrated with posed group photographs. As Chaney notes (1993:92), there is an important sense in which such collections also provide a sense of permanence against a backdrop of potential social change. Deaf clubs, and the Deaf community as a whole, are currently going through a period of change. This can be witnessed within the Deaf club itself as a 'split' (maybe even symbolically and spatially represented in the form of the dividing central staircase in the building) between an older generation full of tradition—for whom regular attendance at religious gatherings and bingo evenings are singularly important occasions enjoyed in an environment protected from hearing influence and spoken language dominance—and a younger generation for whom there are plenty of alternatives to going to the Deaf club since they are more integrated within the hearing community as a consequence of educational change and the effects of mainstreaming (neither of which are necessarily beneficial for this reason), and who attend less frequently. Nevertheless, for this younger generation the Deaf club still fills a gap, often as a resource for cultural identity and political association. Within this younger group there is scope for cultural subversion of the status quo presented by the older generation, a subversion which can find expression through such 'takes' on the kind of self-conscious posing by which members traditionally express social belonging. Within such imagery there is a definite aura of a social order, which is continued (at the same time as it is being subverted) in such photographs as the posed group photographs taken during the parachuting course. Indeed, the library of photographs provides, within the localised context of the Deaf club, a form of public memory (Chaney 1993:88) which is however based on collective perception itself reflected in the quality of the posing.

From presence to expression of the scopic

In this chapter I have focused on visual information which becomes available through taking photographs of what I have termed the scopic social space of the Deaf club. I have collected some evidence on the visual organisation of space, the fluency of the interaction with the camera and the ability to choreograph the information presented through posing, the knowledge of a collective vision required in order to be able to engage with it creatively, the subversive potential of posing as a form of cultural expression, as well as on the importance of a library of photographs as a resource of social order and cultural continuity. I have also argued that what sets apart the use of photographs in the Deaf club from more generic forms of popular photography is the level of engagement with photographs as iconic representations and a collectively shared particular semiotic, namely graphic representation as closely linked to graphic expressions within the language of BSL, as well as the relative status of photographs in comparison to that of written material. Undertaking a photographic representation of a Deaf club has produced information on that club of a kind I had not at all anticipated in the original design of this part of the project.

My choice has been to engage with it qualitatively. The more relevant findings are not found in counting simple visible elements but rather in the stories that developed as the number of photographs taken was mounting, and in the ways that people treated the occasions of photographic recording and viewing. By comparison a greater amount of attention will be given to quantitative analysis in the auto-photography project presented in the next chapter, where I feel there are much clearer benefits to statistical analysis.

However, there are a few observations to be made in comparing the photographs I took with those recorded by Deaf and hearing pupils in the next chapter, reported in the next chapter. These observations are less indications of how photography is dealt with within the community than they are indicative of the sort of photograph that Deaf people look for in a large number of photographs that have been taken of them in the context of the Deaf club. There is more of a shift here from the collective to the personal, although the summarising activity of counting elements of course means that only those elements which are shared between the many rather than the few become significant (and also on occasion those elements which do not surface at all). It is much less clear to me whether the presence of a 'collective perception' which I alluded to earlier, affects the choices people make in discriminating between photographs largely on grounds of a conventional (bourgeois) æsthetic. Photographs which showed movement blur were most often ignored, and photographs which showed conventional framing were clearly preferred. In line with a more general æsthetic preference which is also reflected in such areas of dedicated photography as advertising, posing is discarded in favour of a more spontaneous 'look', except by older people, who still select the occasional posed photograph.

Out of the ten people who took part in my photographic representation of Deaf people's activities during an evening in the Deaf club, one person felt unable to choose favourite photographs. Therefore the dataset contains 9x4=36 favourite photographs. Of those favourite photographs 33 were unposed, and the three that were posed were selected by two of the older members of the Deaf club. To a large extent the selection of unposed photographs overlaps with a marked preference to see signed interaction included in the photographs: 19 favourite photographs, that is just over half of the dataset, included signing. Another noticeable feature was the variable called 'body framing'. This measured whether a photograph showed the face only, the torso or the entire body. In the case of the members of the Deaf club, 32 (89%) of the photographs selected showed the torso, and again there is obvious overlap with the photographs containing signing: the signing space generally covers the torso. But it may equally be attributable to a more conventional æsthetic derived from classical portraiture, which frequently depicted its subjects from the waist up. Even so, another aspect may well be relating to the identification of the person(s) involved, since in the case of Deaf people, posture and demeanour may provide information on character and identity as important as the features and the expression of the face. By comparison the hearing pupil's dataset reveals that the hearing pupils selected far more photographs which showed the entire body, typically an indication of photographs which show people in a surrounding of some kind (48% against 11% in the Deaf club), but this again may only be significant in so far as the hearing people regularly photographed outside, whereas the photographs of the Deaf people discussed here were mostly taken inside.

Finally, the variable 'type of activity' measured whether people were merely present, interacting with each other, or interacting with the camera. Running to some extent parallel to both posing (in which case there is most often some form of interaction with the camera) and signing (which depicts interaction between people) 26 out of 36 photographs showed interaction with people, 3 with the camera, and 7 portrayed mere presence. The low incidence of photographs which show interaction with the camera (8%) will be attributable to the fact that the photographer was unknown, and maybe also to the fact that he is a hearing person; in the dataset of the favourite photographs of Deaf pupils, who took the photographs they selected themselves, the incidence of photographs showing interaction with the camera rises to 36%, against a mere 13% in the case of the favourite photographs taken by hearing pupils. The variable 'posture' showed most agreement overall, with around 60% of all favourite photographs showing people standing, and most others showing people sitting down.

The observations reported upon here represent a general trend. They are positive exploratory findings, but many factors are still unknown, such as the reasons that people chose the photographs, or the purpose they had in store for them, as well as the more important fact that there is little description of the æsthetic qualities of photographic representations that meet the demands of popular taste. The main contribution in this area is to be found in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1990), whose analysis is mainly a Marxist one dealing with class distinctions in judgements of the merit of photographs as well as class distinctions in judgements pertaining to the 'photographability' of potential subject matter. The next chapter, then, will focus in more depth on collective vision as collective æsthetic expression, in an autophotography study involving sets of photographs taken by hearing and Deaf pupils themselves.

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1 . I did not get invited to attend a religious service by any of the volunteers; this may be an indication that such services are perceived as not being a 'photographable' topic by people in the club.

2 . I am using the lowercase 'd' for 'deaf' here because the intake of children in the case of many such schools proceeds on the basis of audiological loss, as well as additional criteria reflecting the philosophies of individual schools. Having said this, it is not unlikely that some children who attended a school like St. John's are from Deaf parents or have other links with, or interest in, the Deaf community.

3 . CACDP: Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People. The Council is often referred to as 'Cap' by Deaf people, involving a sign as if putting on a cap. CACDP's examinations are recognised nationally by institutions and organisations of/for Deaf people.

4 . Particularly strong examples of this can be found in a compilation of poetry signed by Dorothy Miles (1971), but this is written in English. There are also some good examples, illustrated with drawings, in Padden and Humphries (1988:104–109); in the chapter entitled "The heightened use of language" in Klima and Bellugi (1980:317 ff.); and a chapter on poetry in a book on Sign Language of the Netherlands, which contains a poem signed by Wim Emmerik in extensively illustrated form (Koenen, Bloem and Janssen 1993:174 ff.).

Visual stories: photographs by hearing and Deaf pupils

6

"The effort, in other words, is not to transfom social science into cultural analysis but to make the analysis of symbols a major focus of multidimensional social science." (Alexander 1990:16)

"All the management of our lives depends on the senses, and since that of sight is the most comprehensive and the noblest of these, there is no doubt that the inventions which serve to augment its powers are among the most useful there can be." (Descartes quoted in Jay 1993:21)

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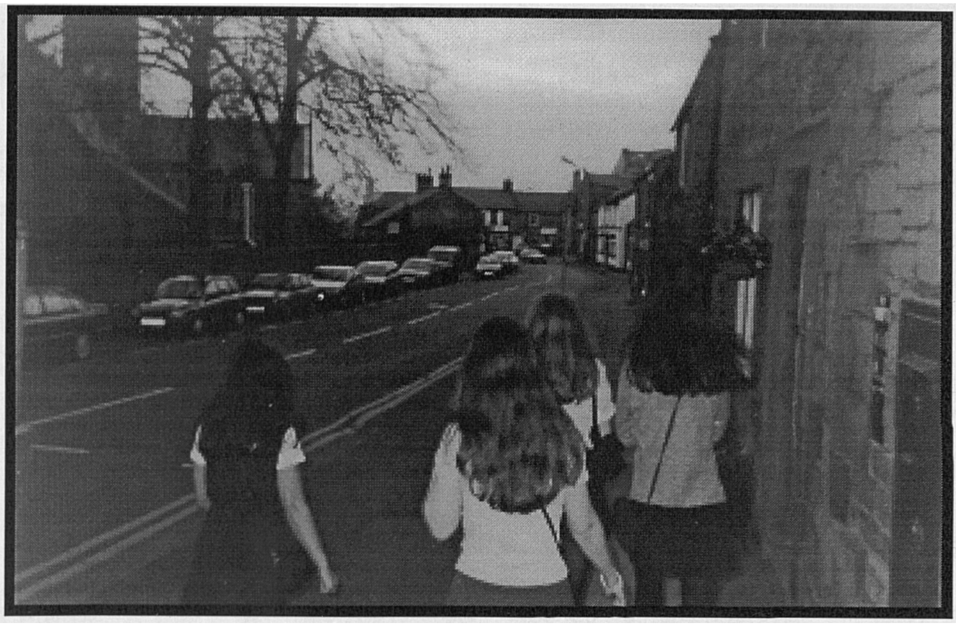

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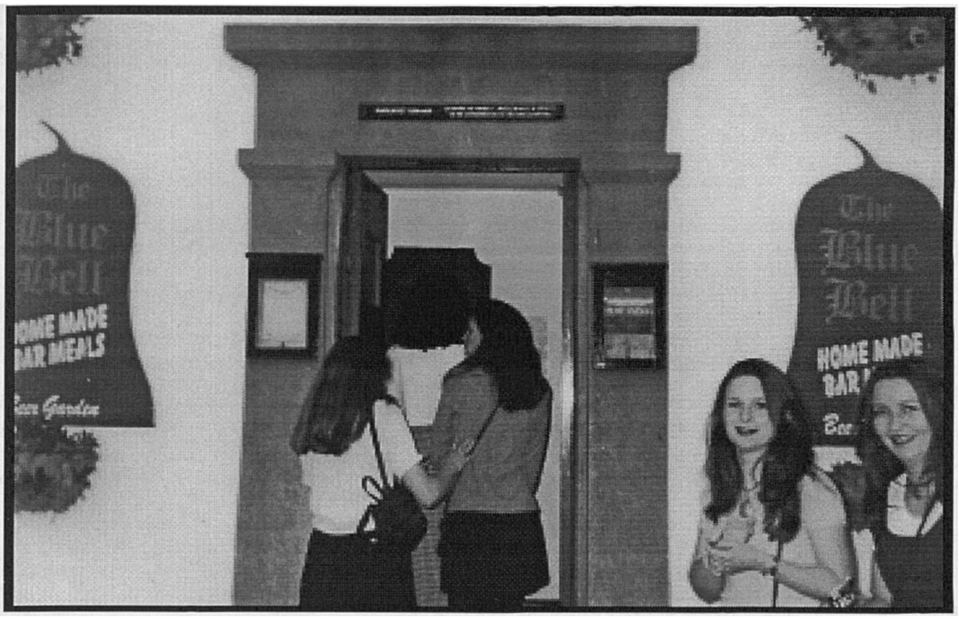

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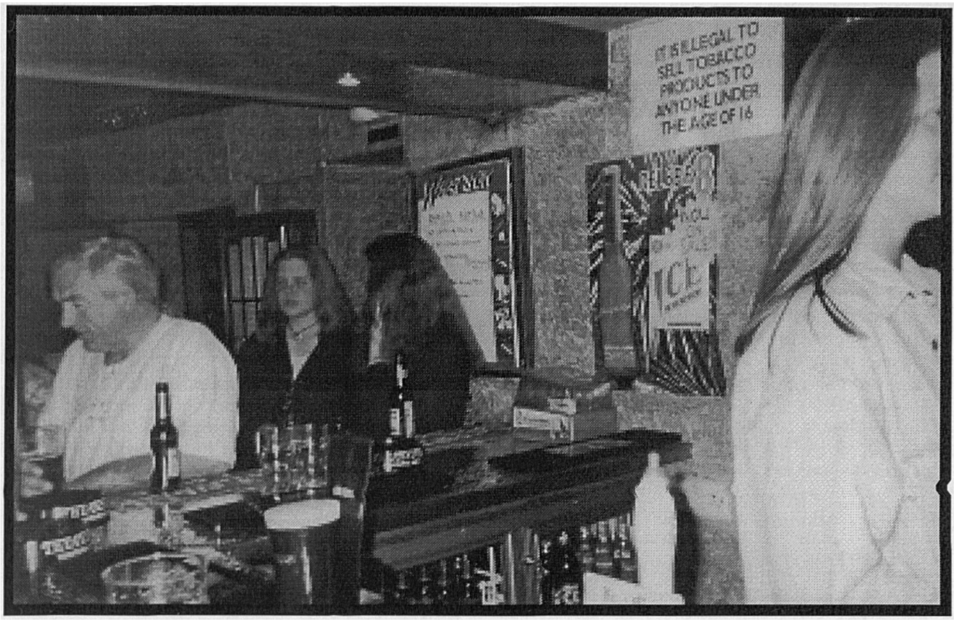

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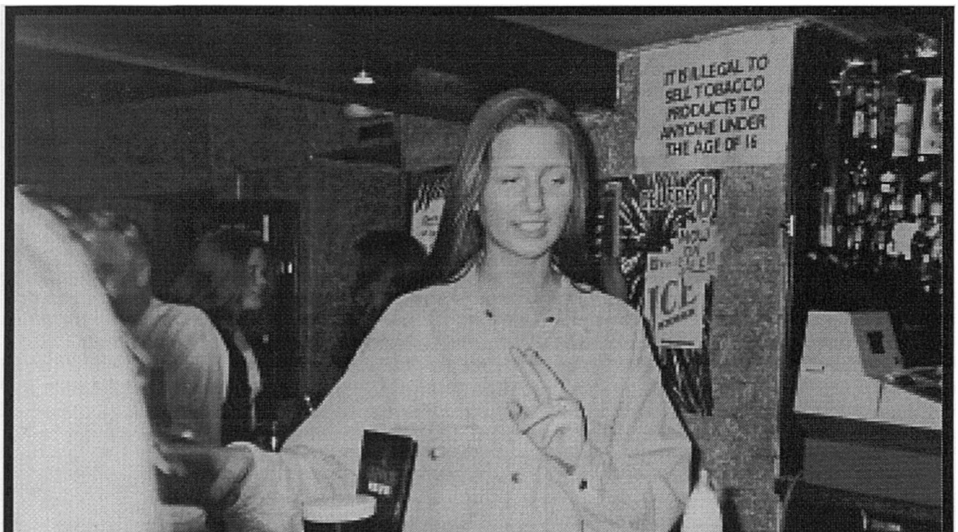

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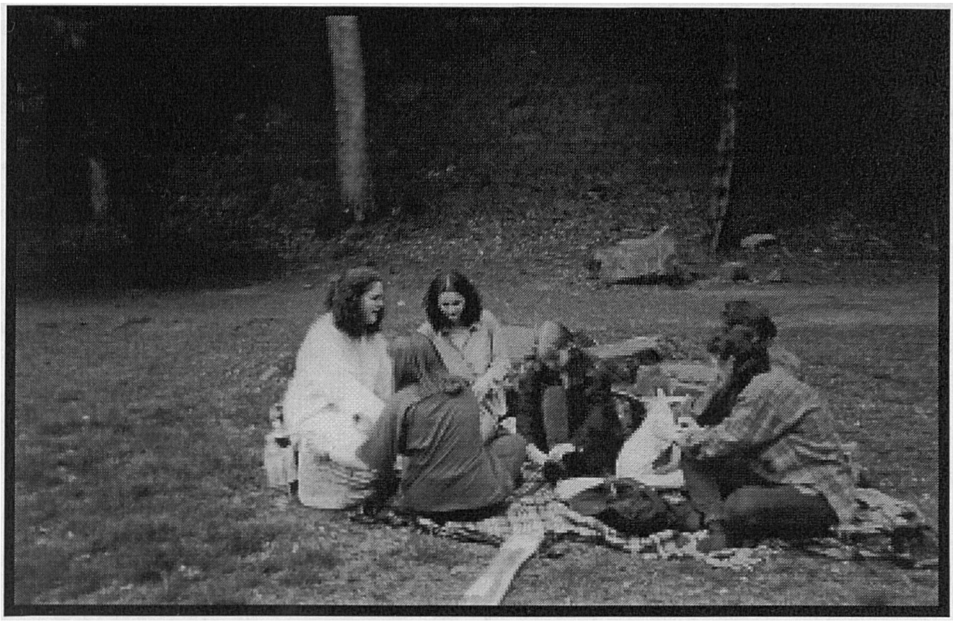

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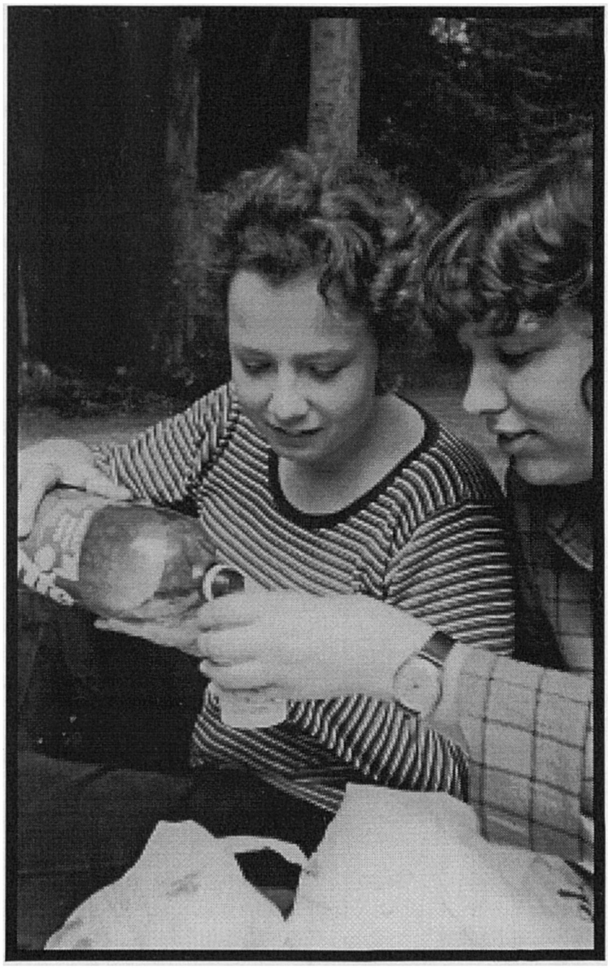

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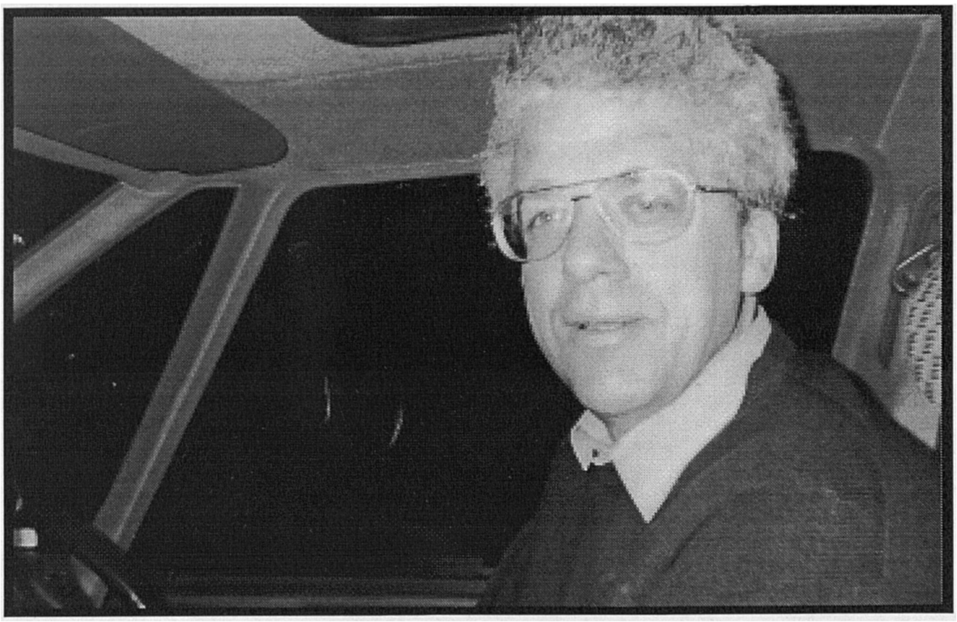

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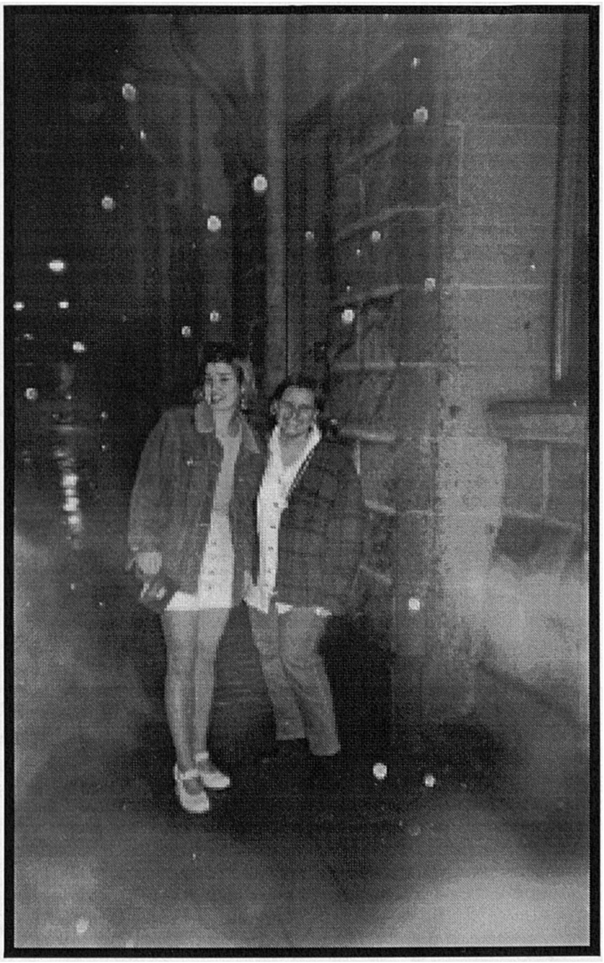

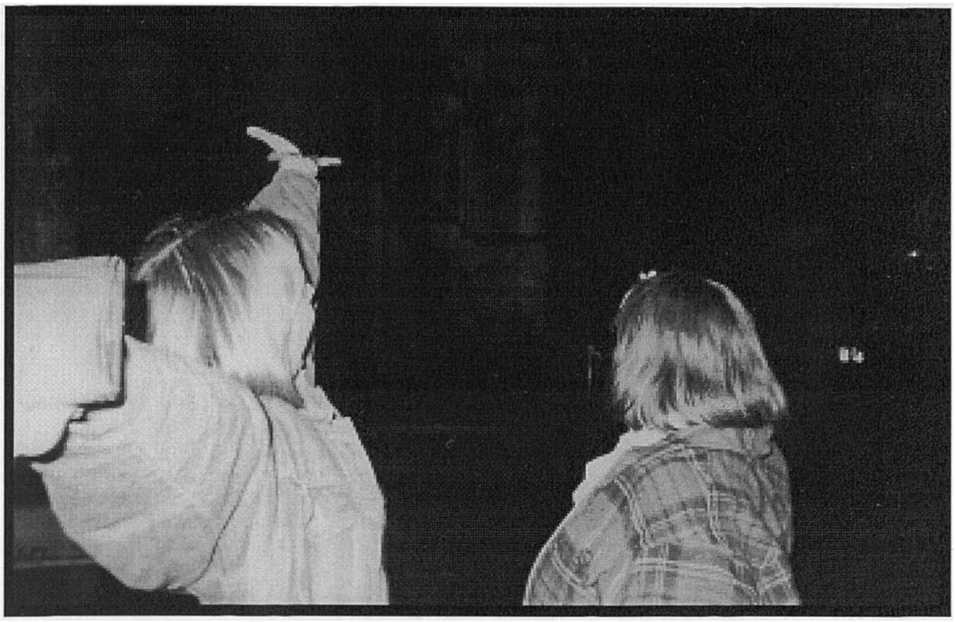

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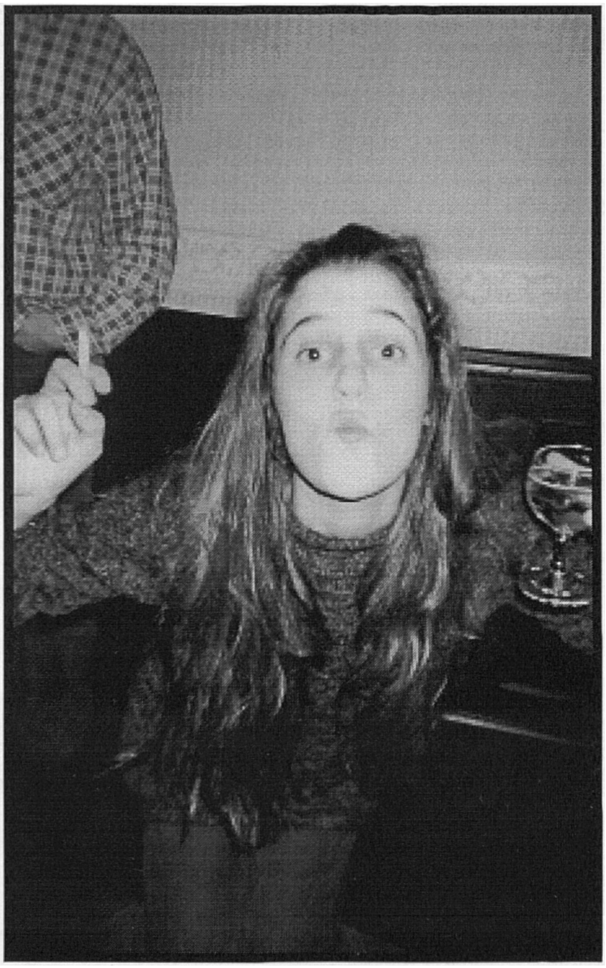

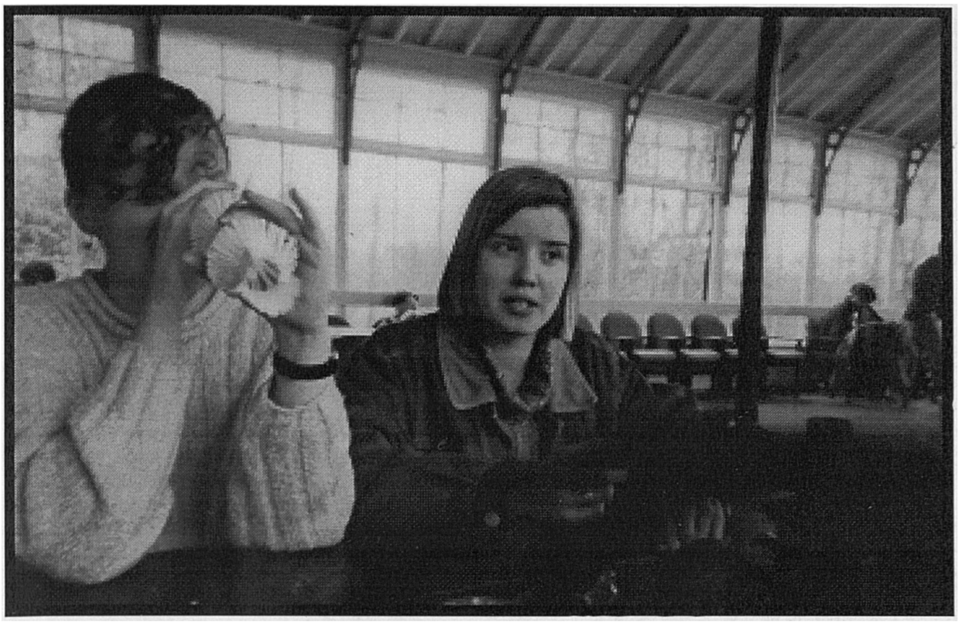

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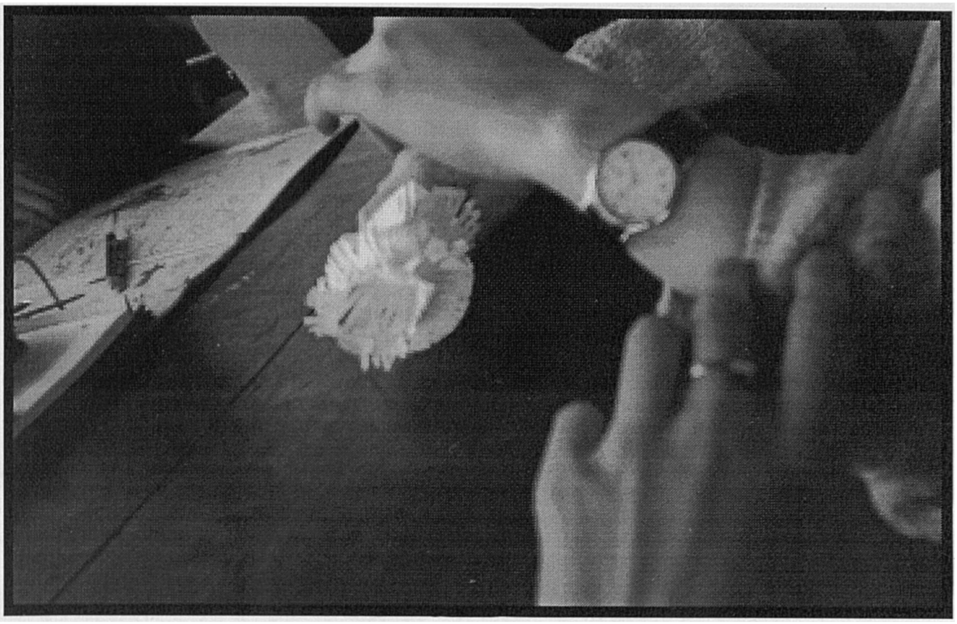

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27 Andrew (H)

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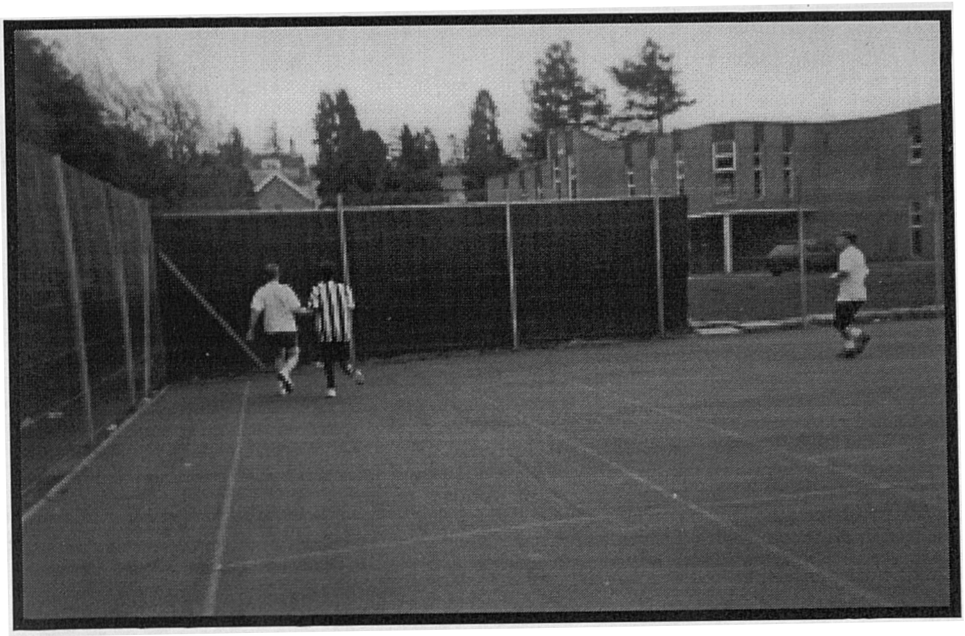

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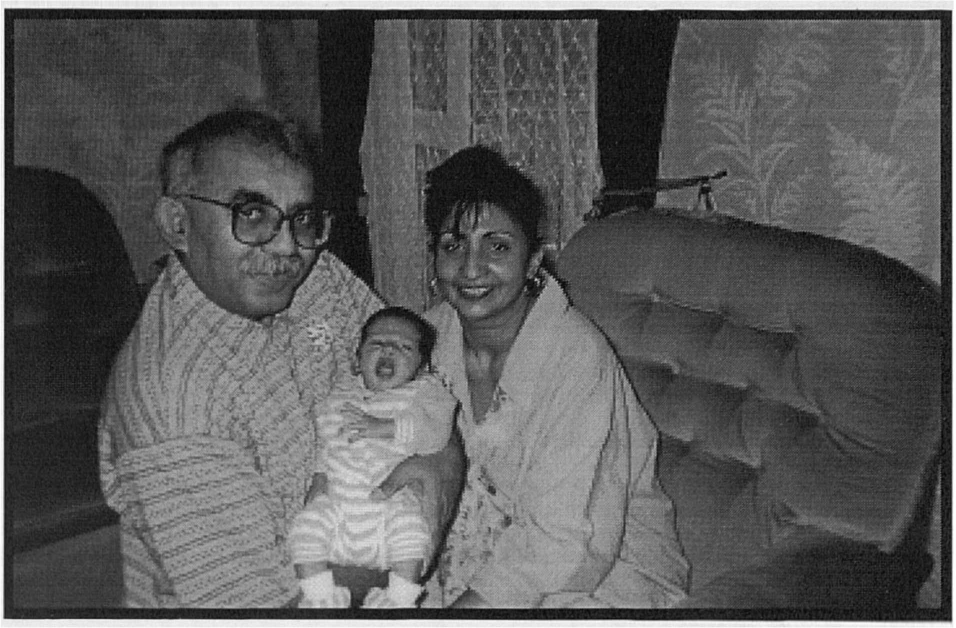

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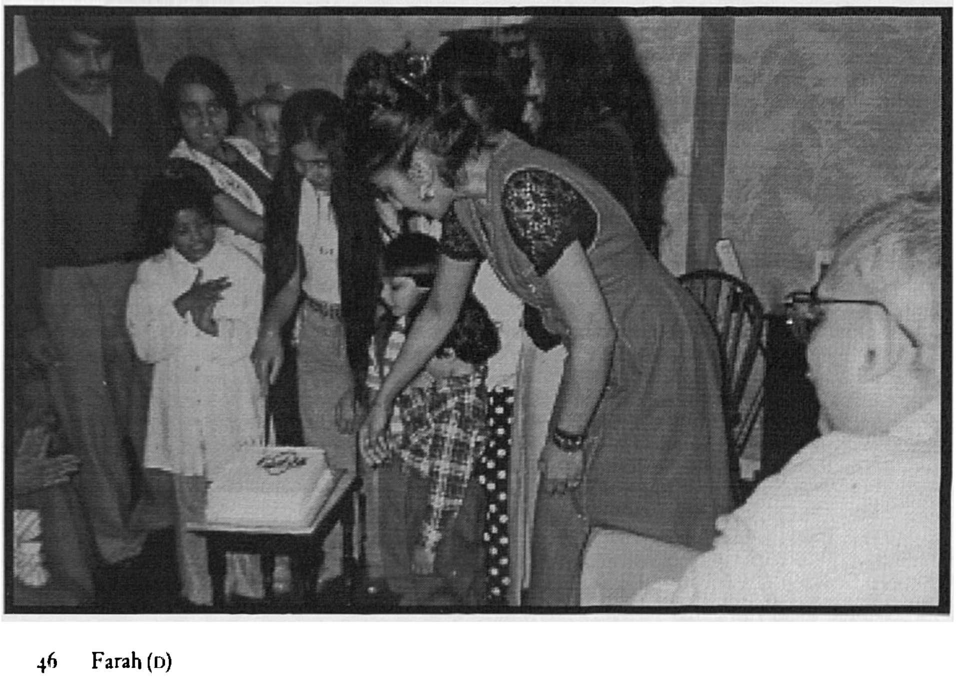

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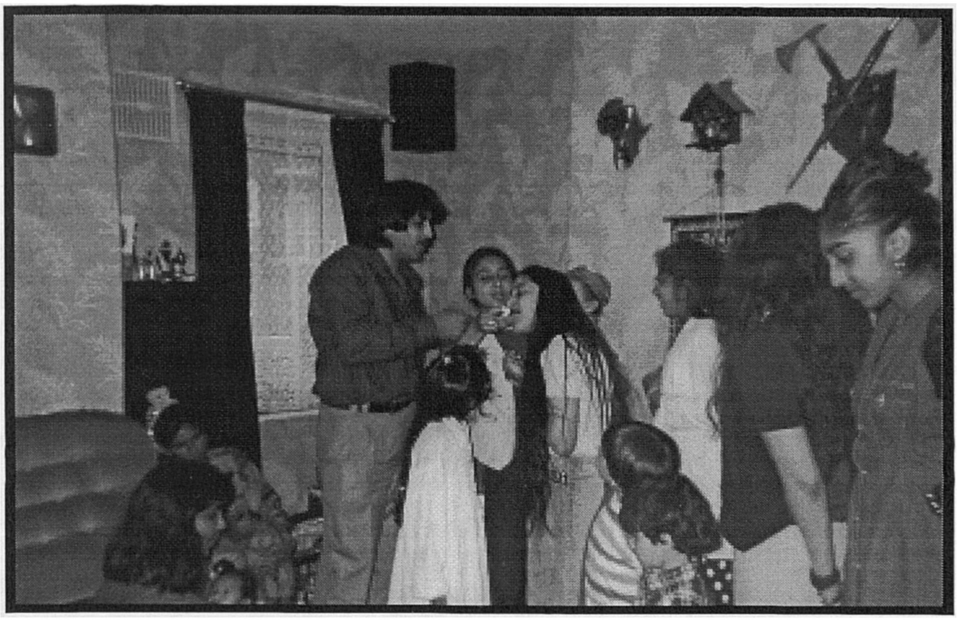

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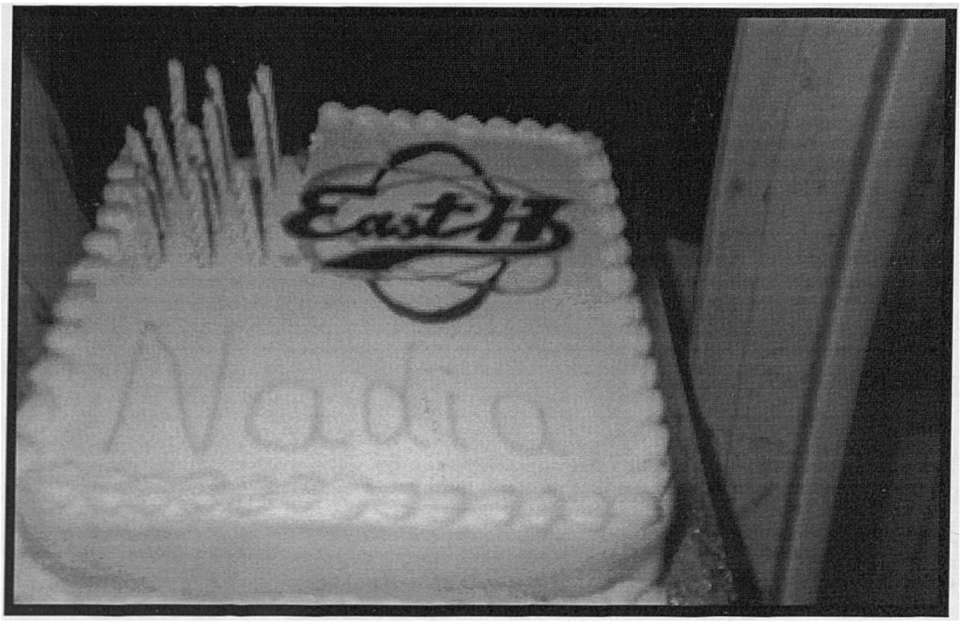

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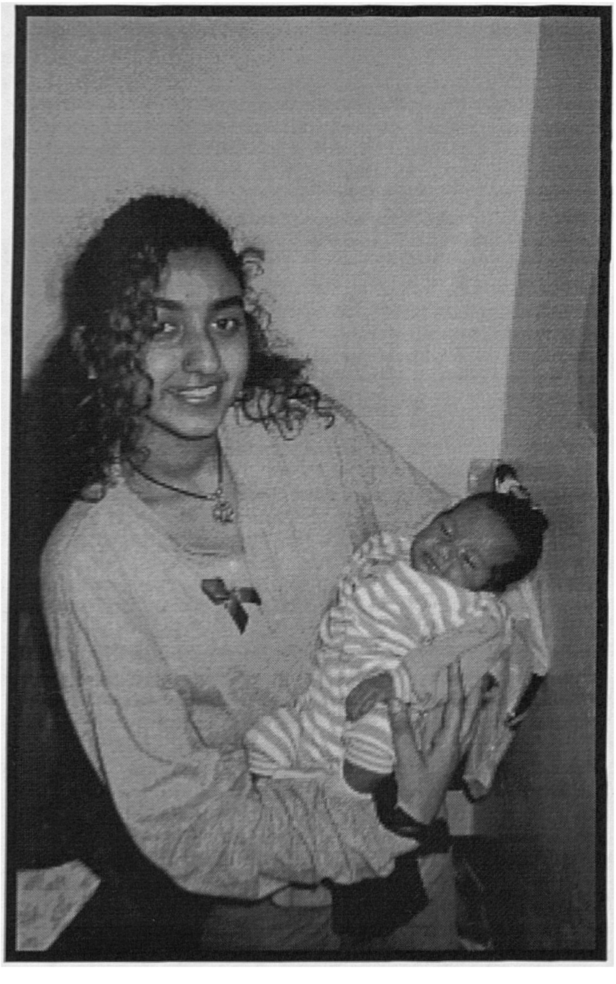

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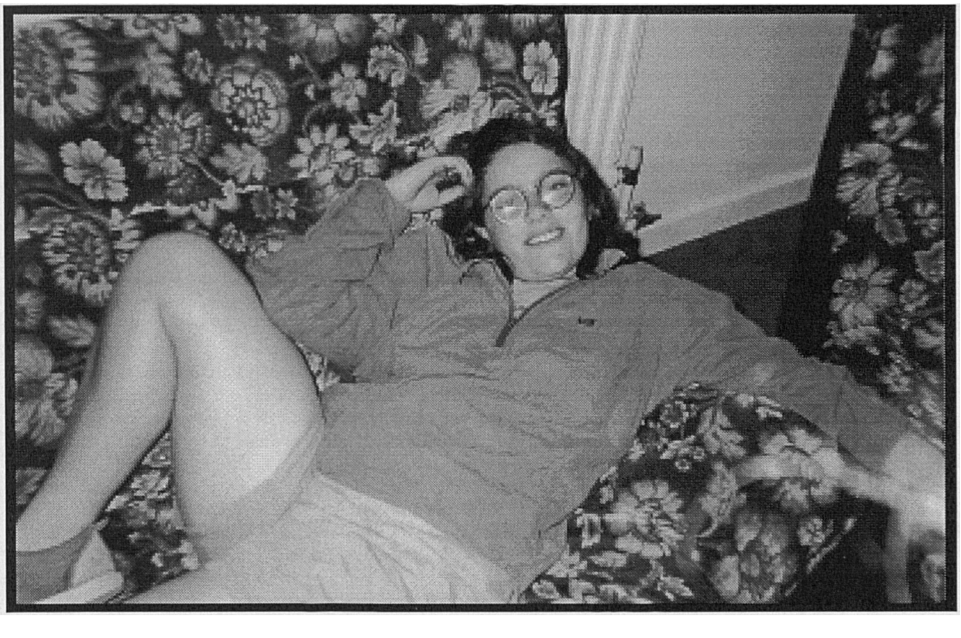

52 Farah (D)

53 Melanie (D)

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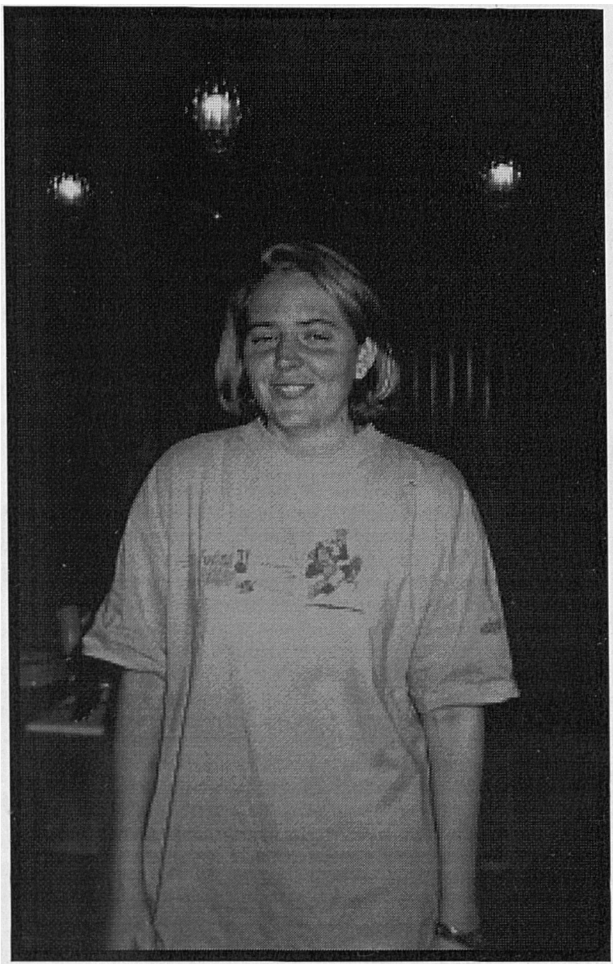

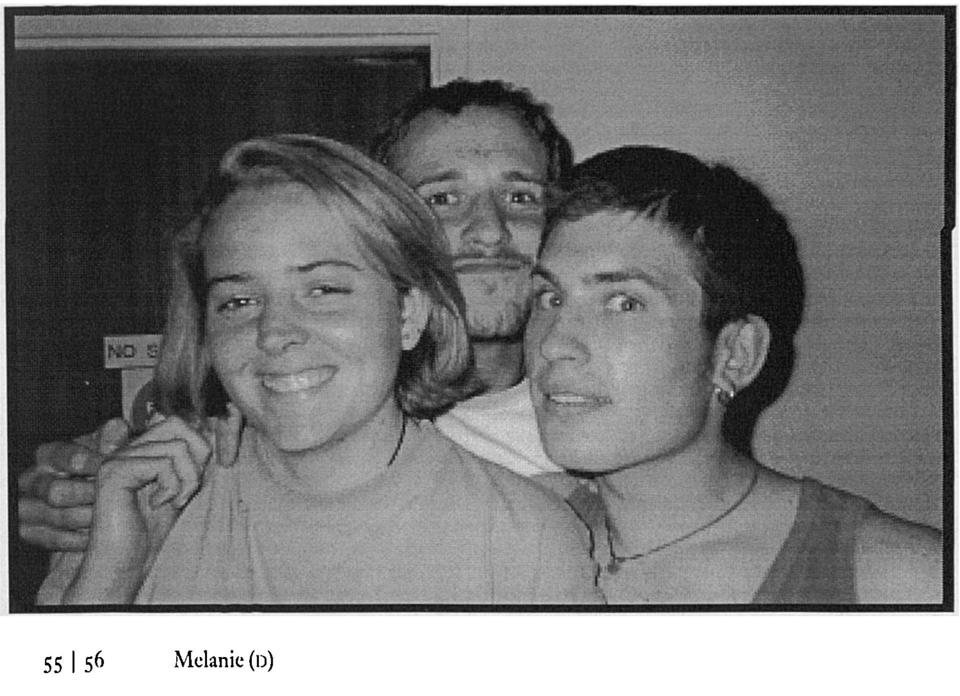

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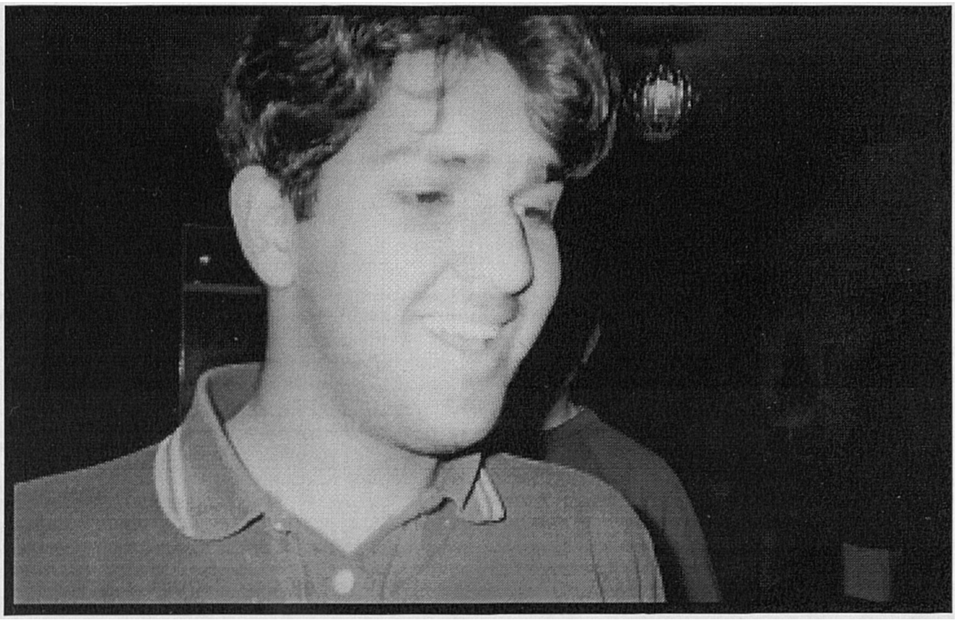

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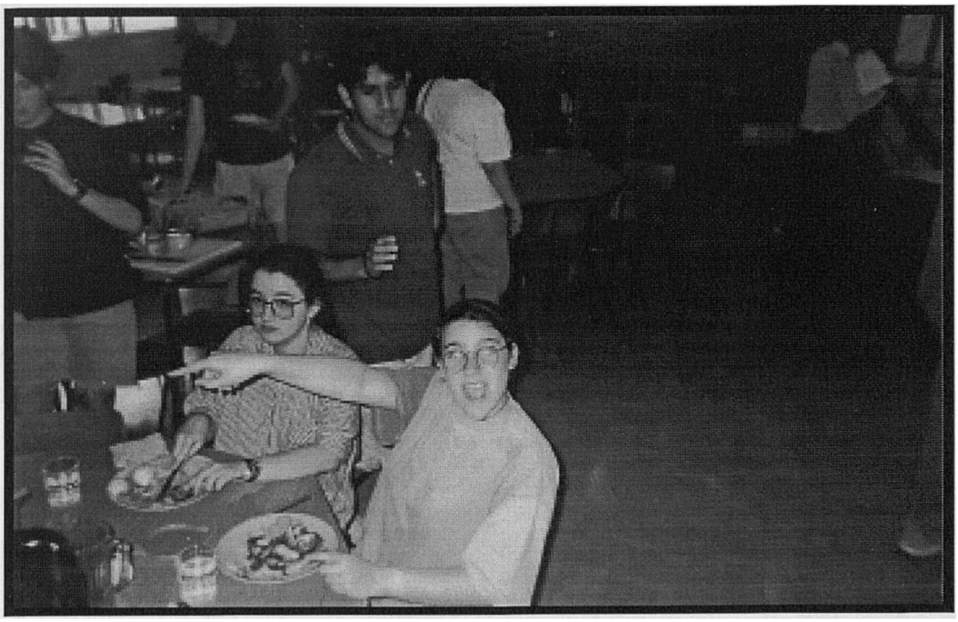

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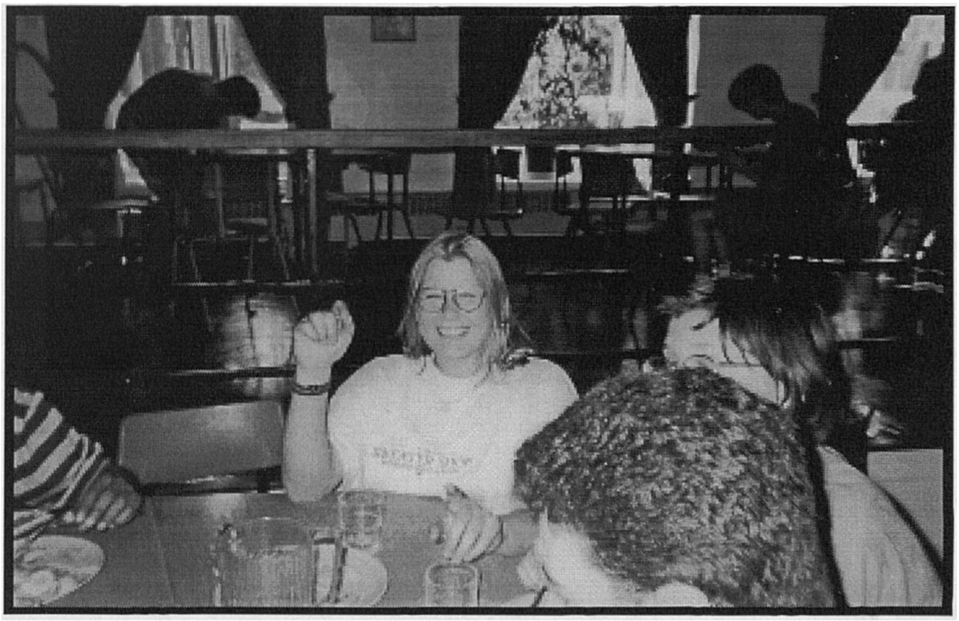
59 Melanie (D)



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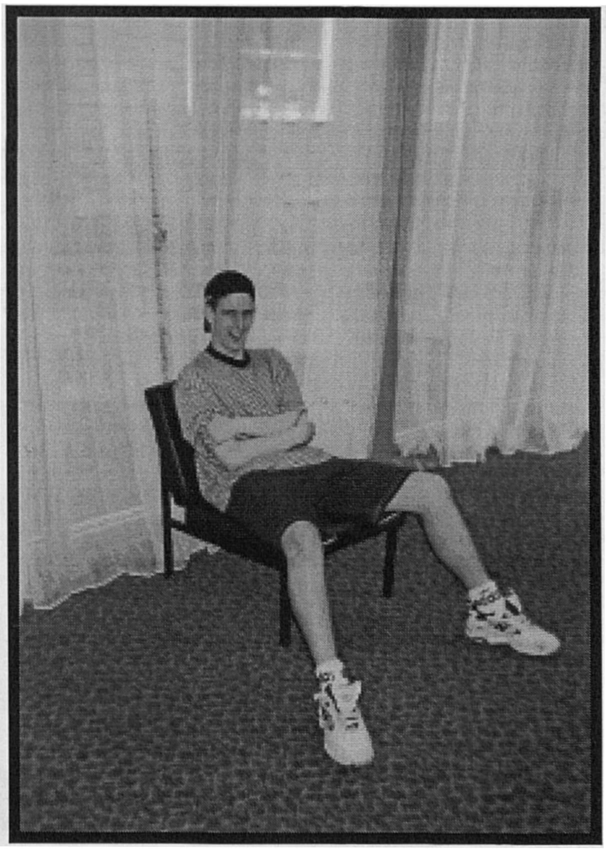
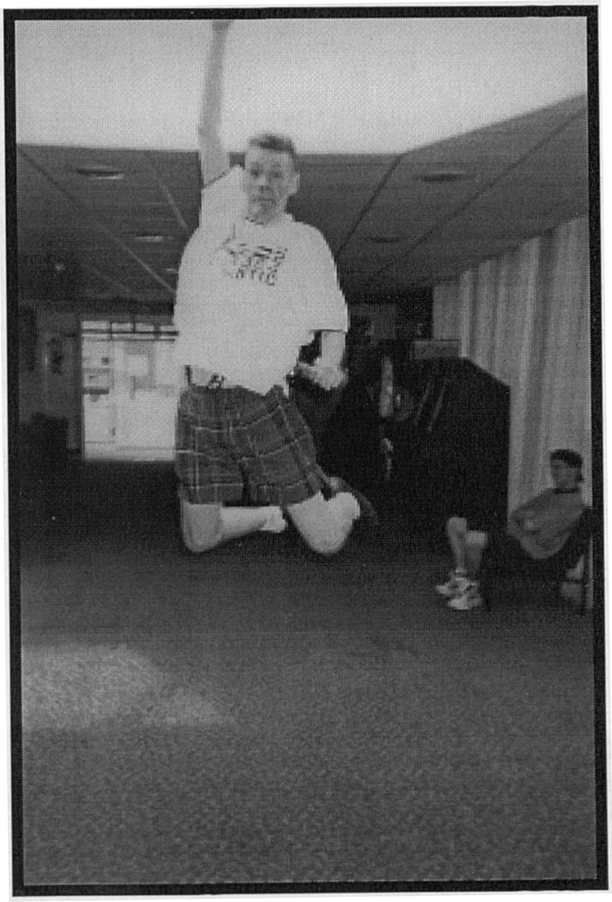
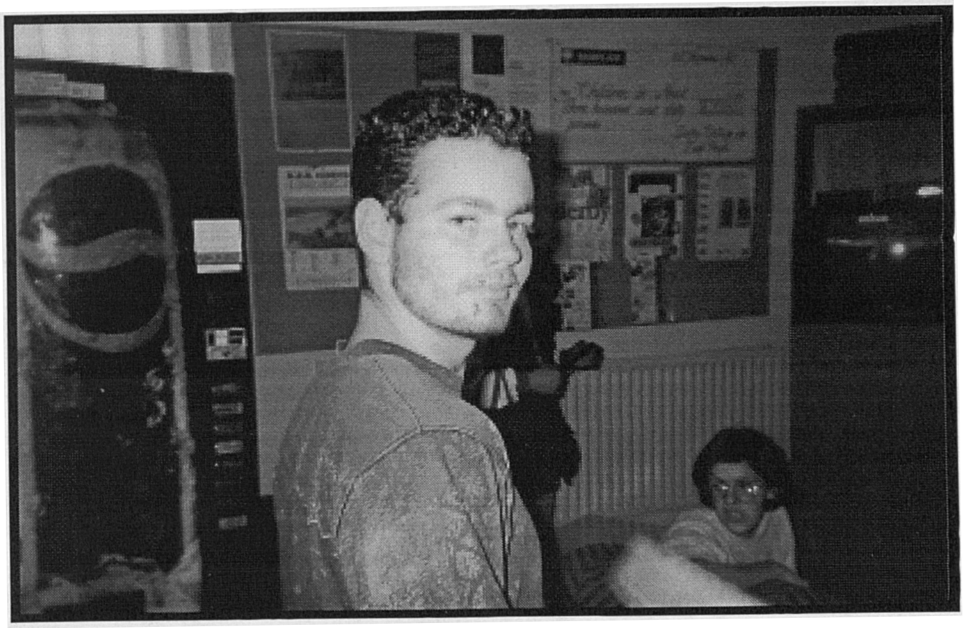
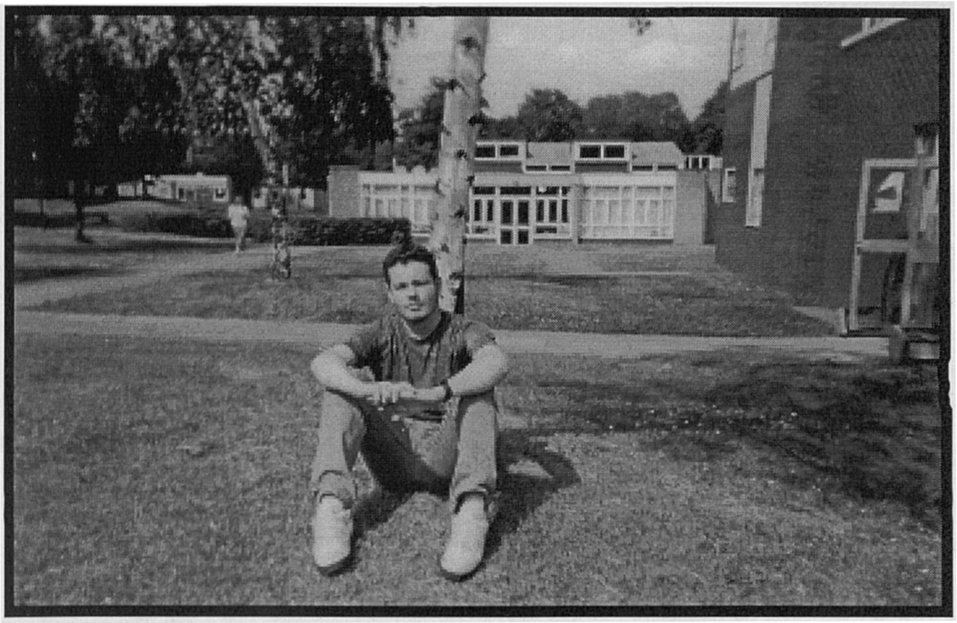
61 | 62 John (D)



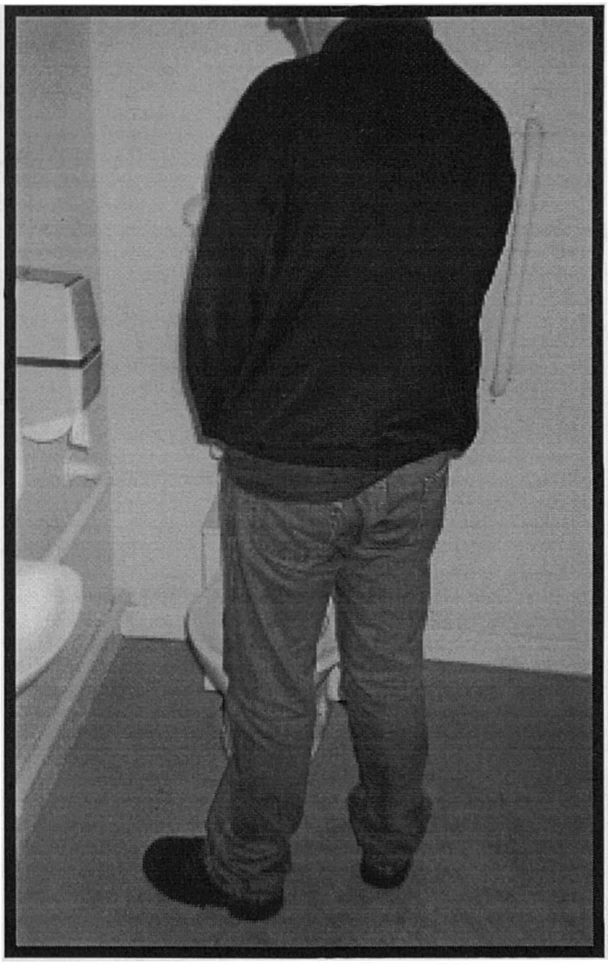


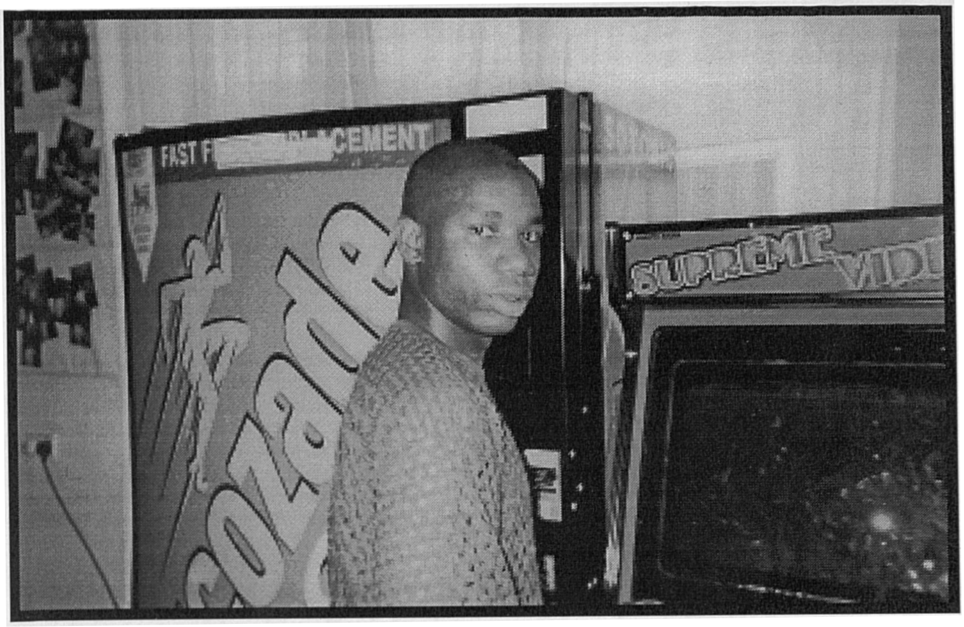


63 | 64 John (D)



65 | 66 John (D)



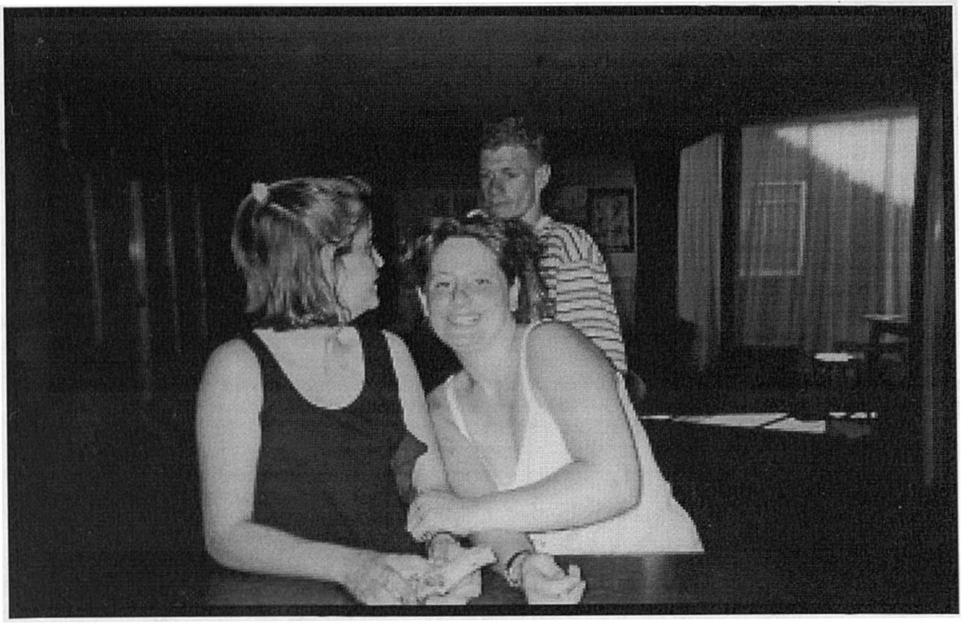


67 John (D)

68 Cheryl (D)

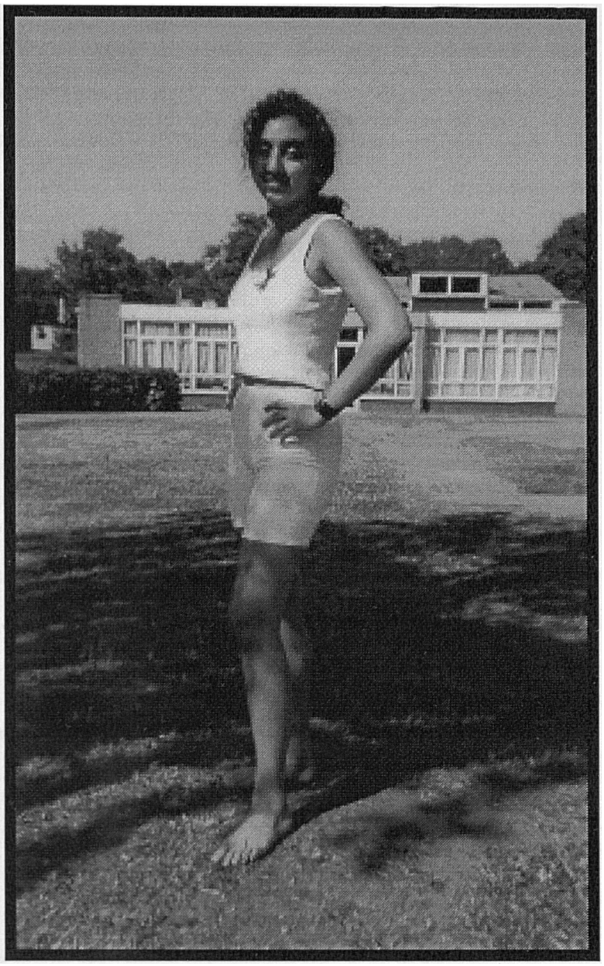
69 Cheryl (D)

70 Cheryl (D)

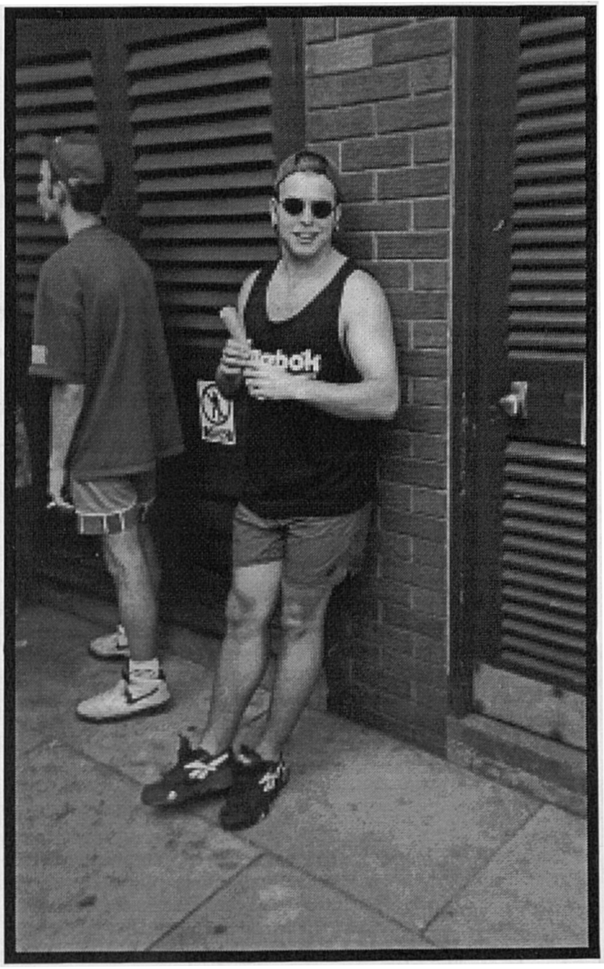


71 Cheryl (D)

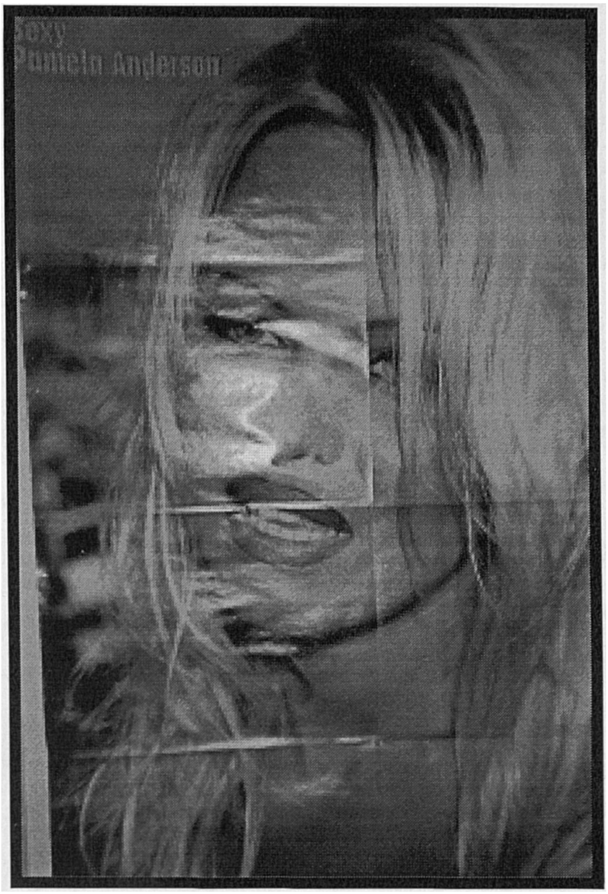
72 Cheryl (D)



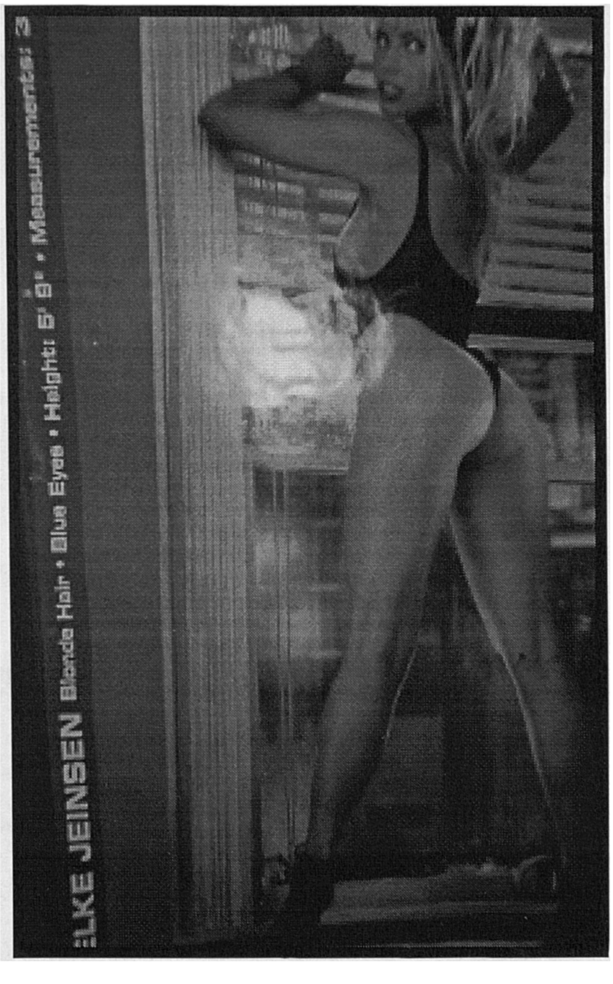
73 | 74 Cheryl (D)

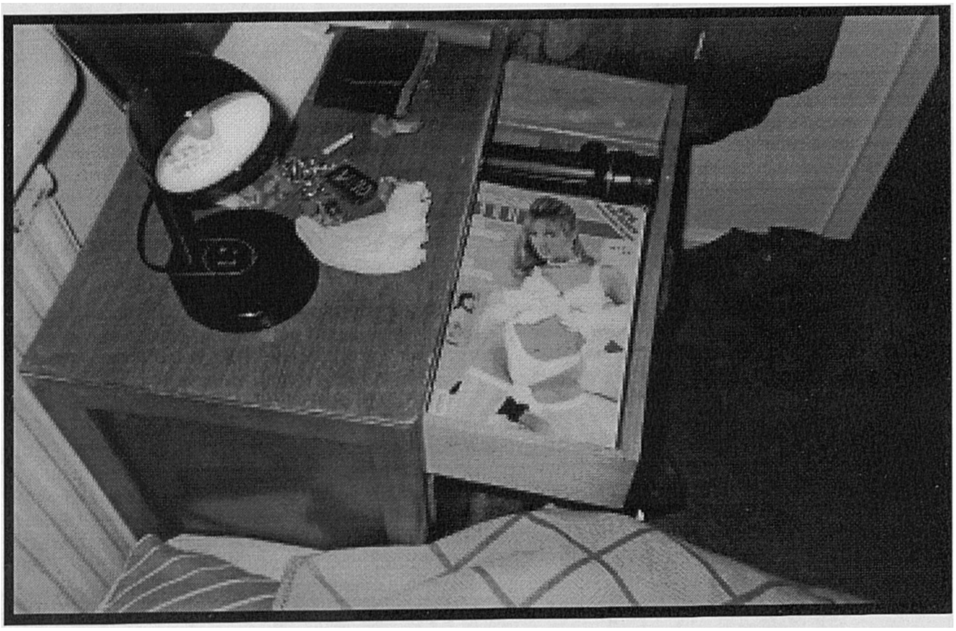


75 | 76 Cheryl (D)

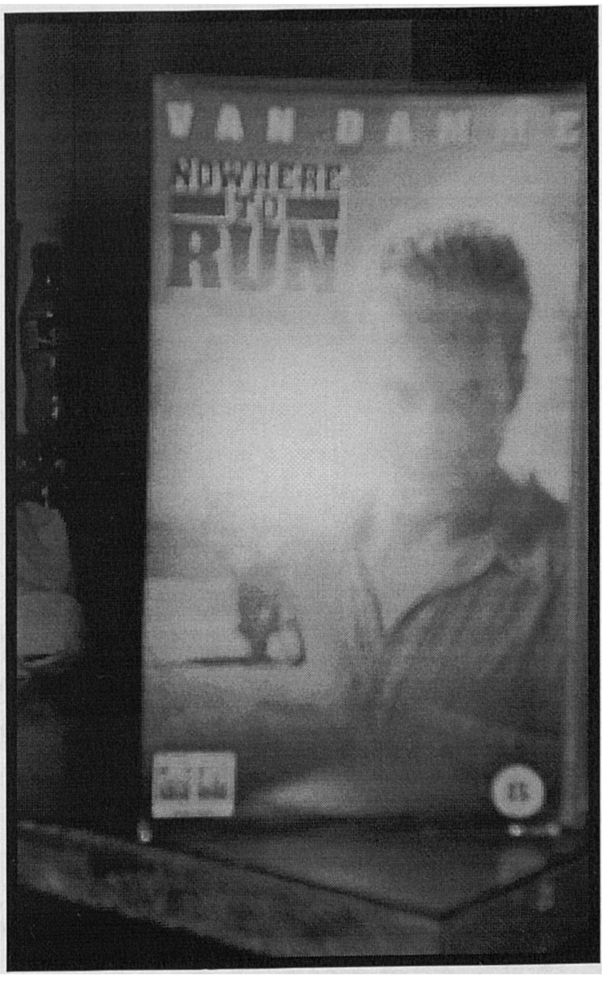

Sexy
Pamela Anderson

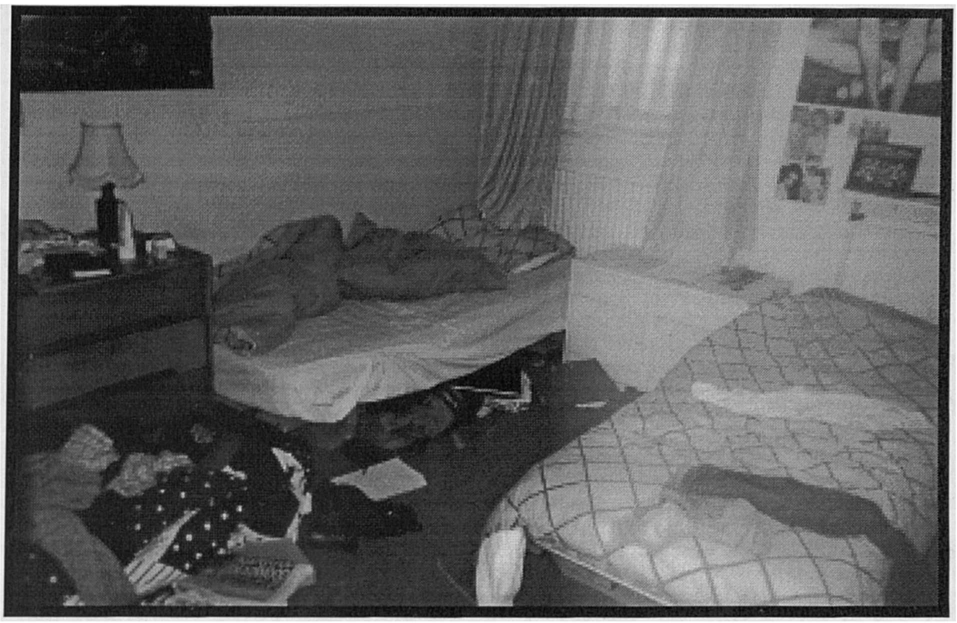
77 | 78 David (D)


LKE JEINSEN Blonde Hair • Blue Eyes • Height: 5' 8" • Measurements: 3

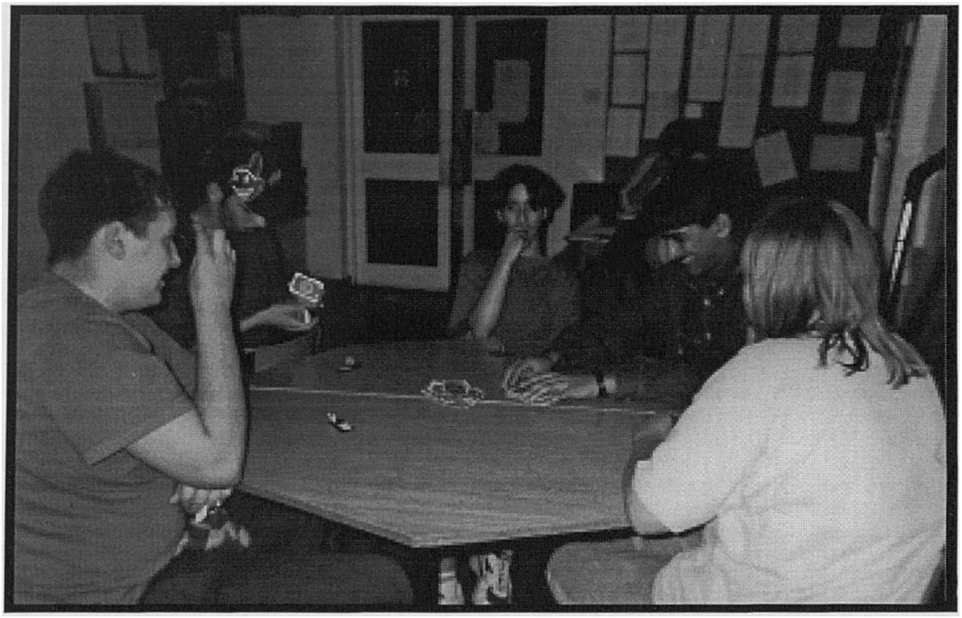


79 | 80 David (D)



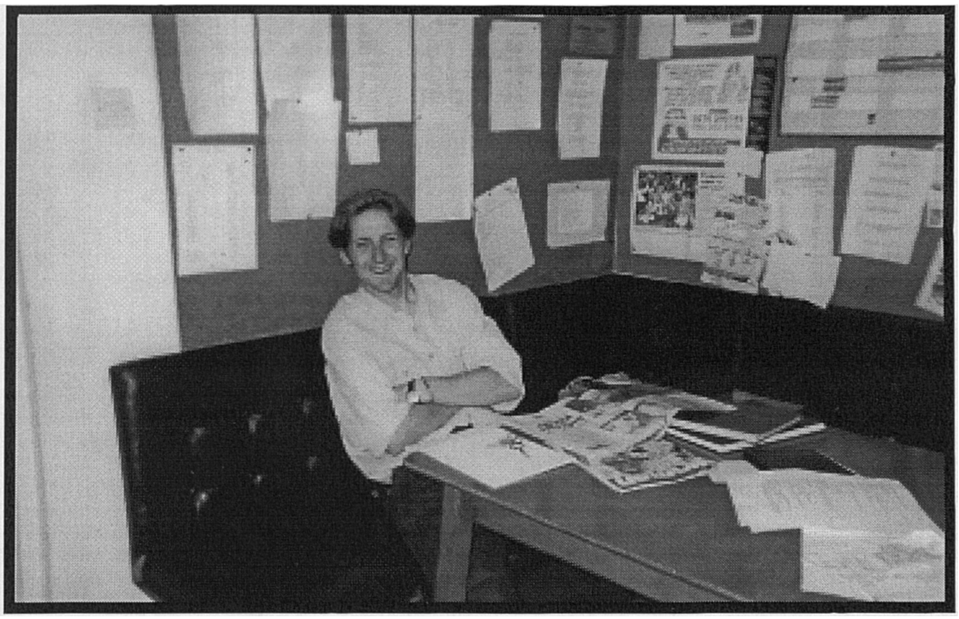


81 David (D)



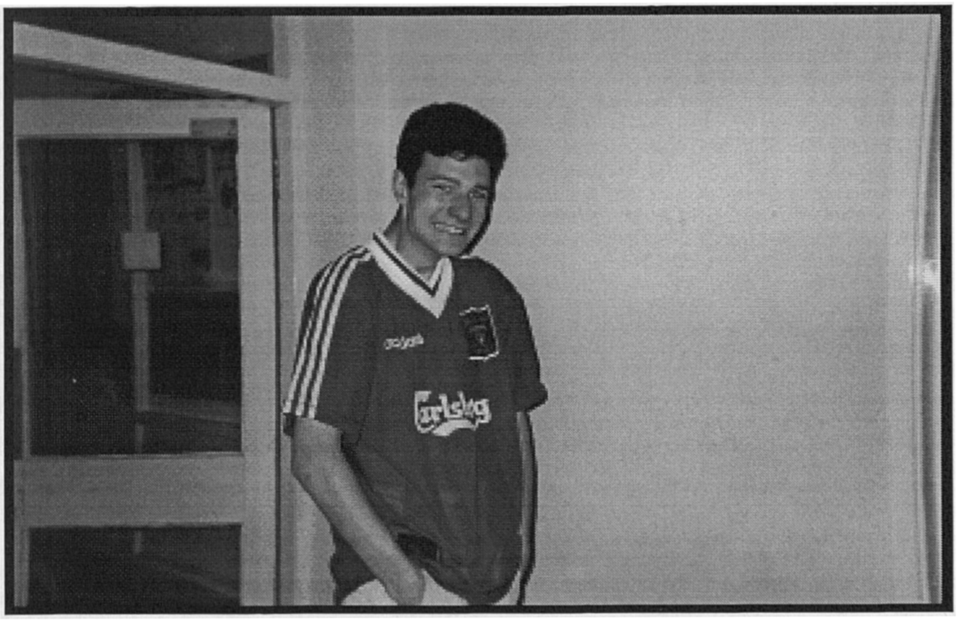
82 Emma-Jane (D)

83 Emma-Jane (D)



84 Emma-Jane (D)

85 Emma-Jane (D)



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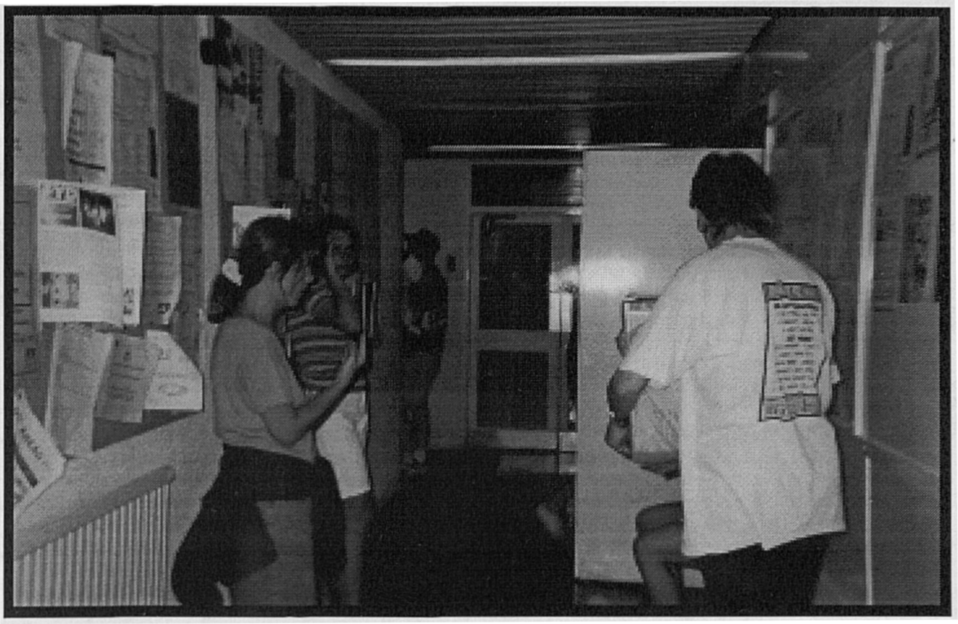

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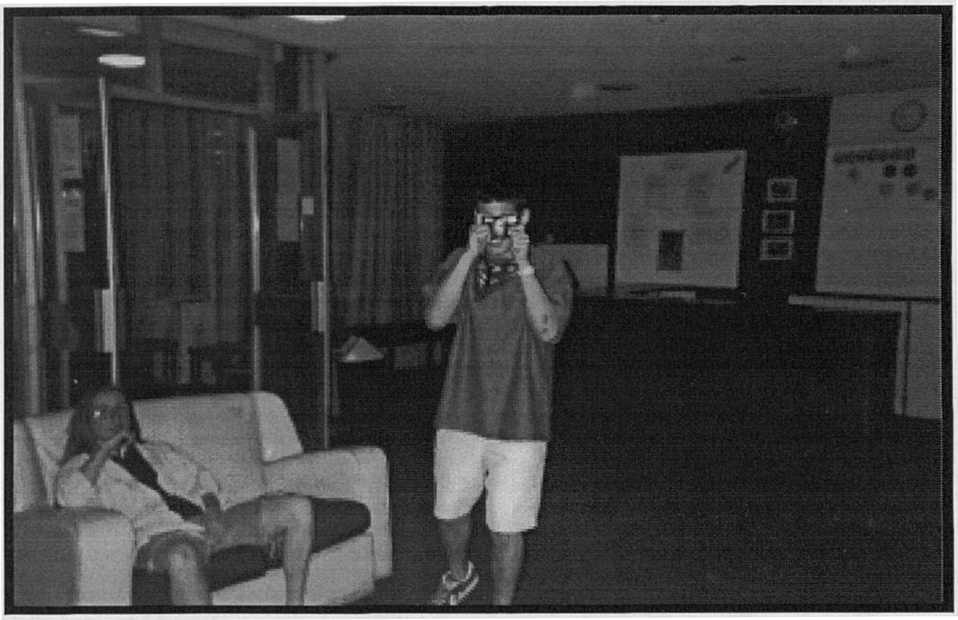

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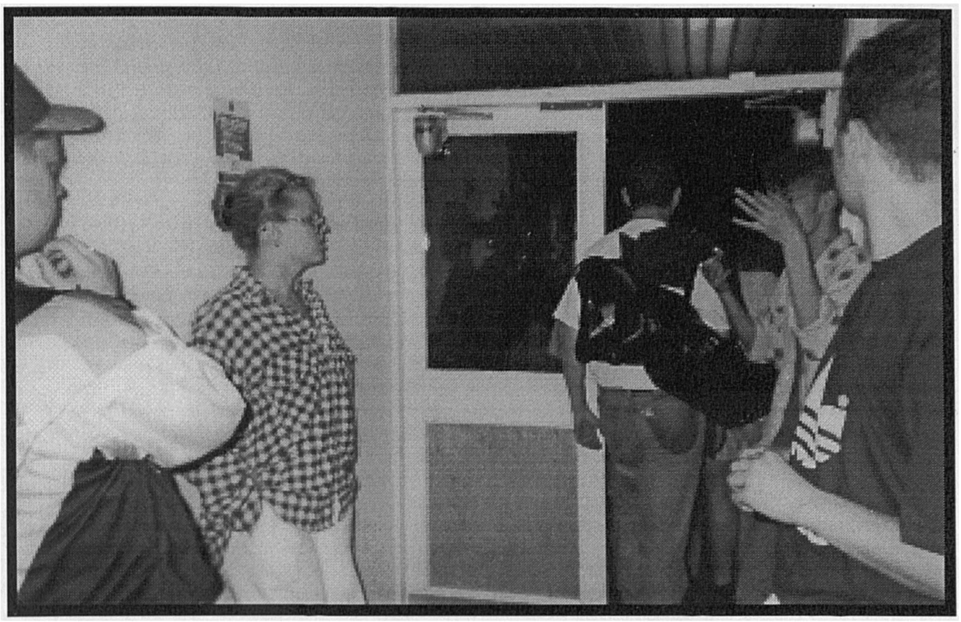
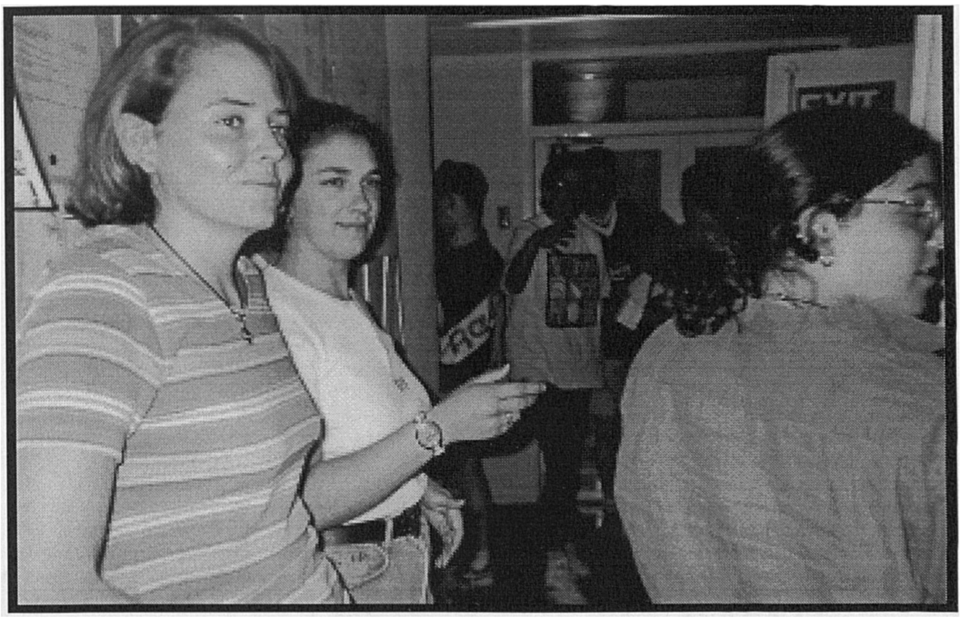


89 Emma-Jane (D)



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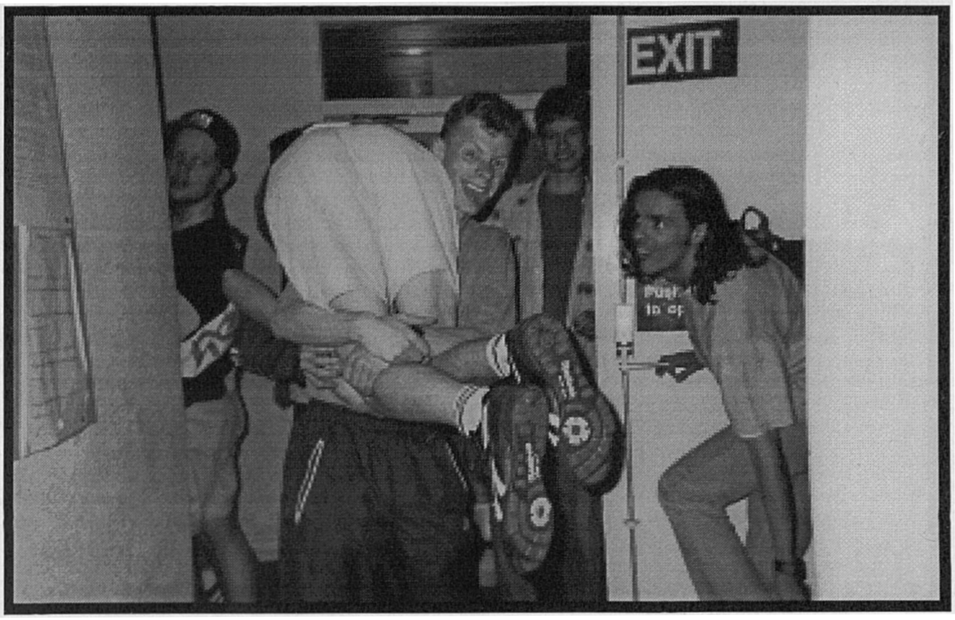

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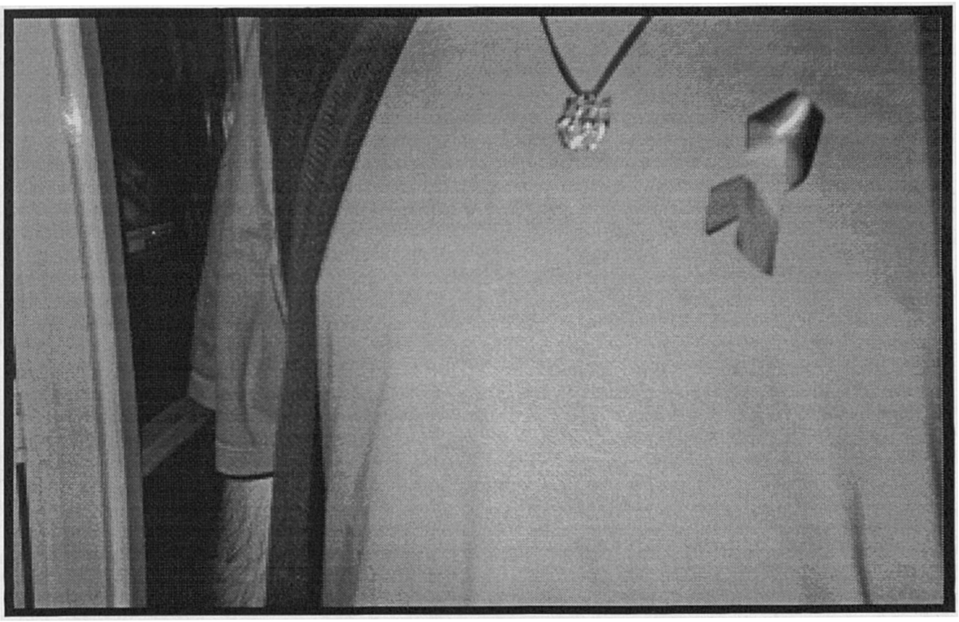
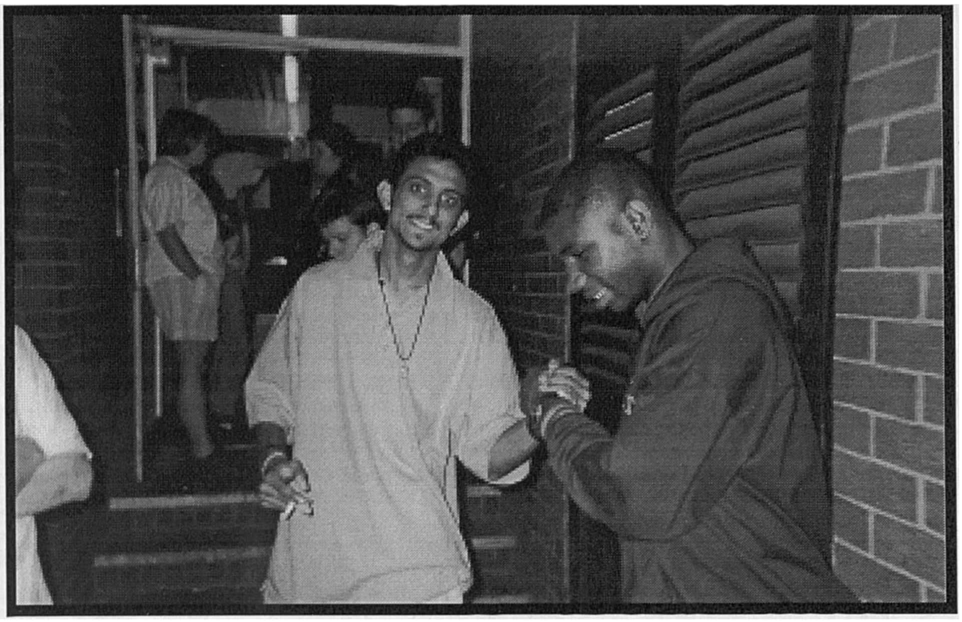
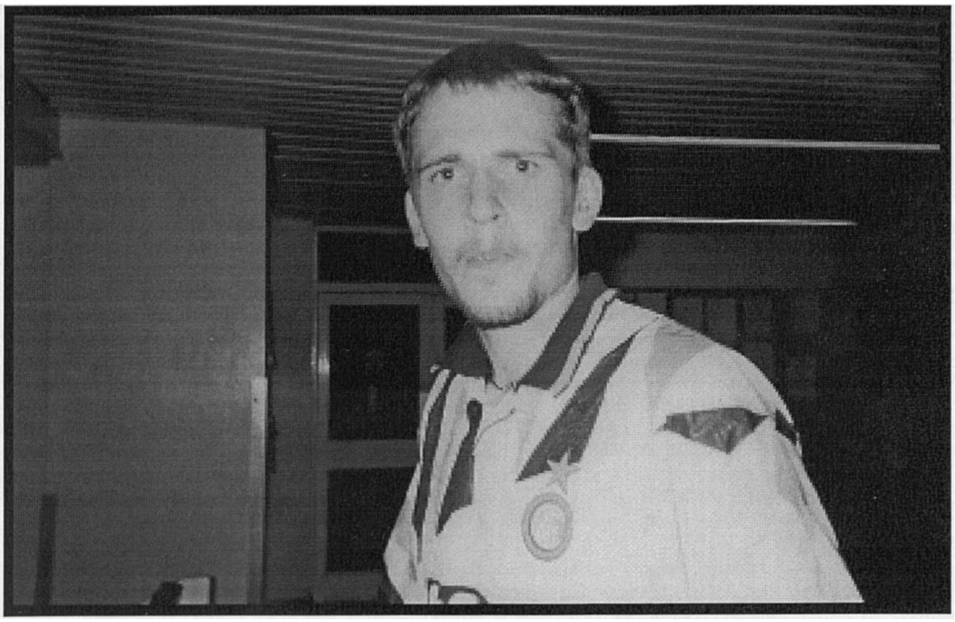


92 Emma-Jane (D)



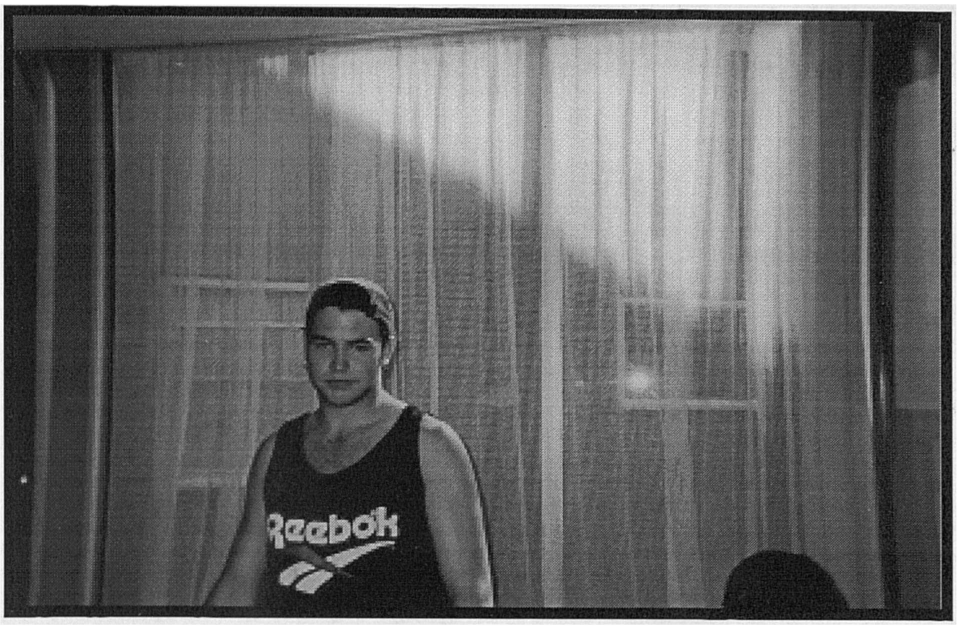
93 Emma-Jane (D)

94 Emma-Jane (D)



95 Emma-Jane (D)

96 Paul (D)



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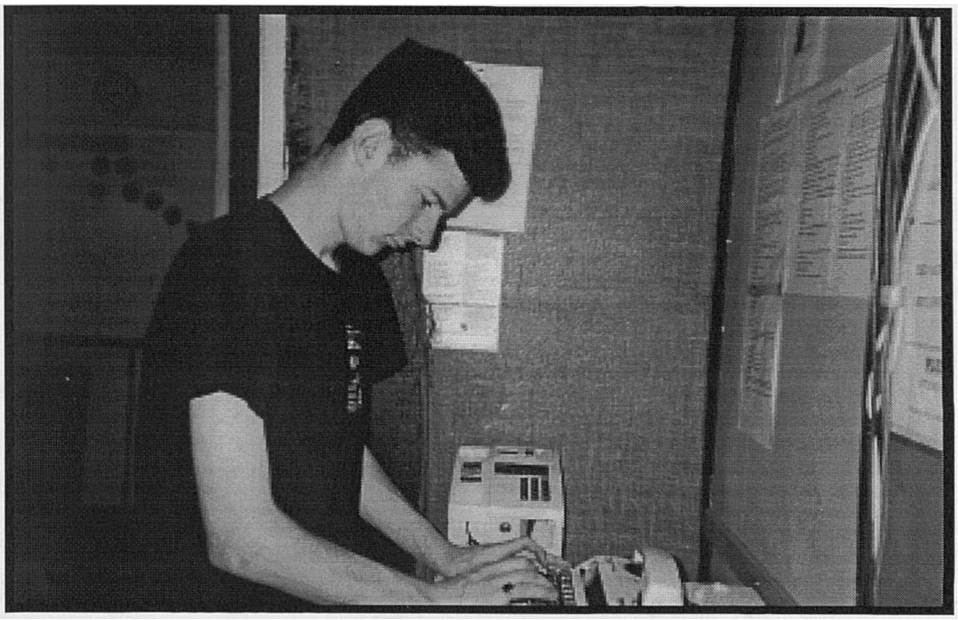

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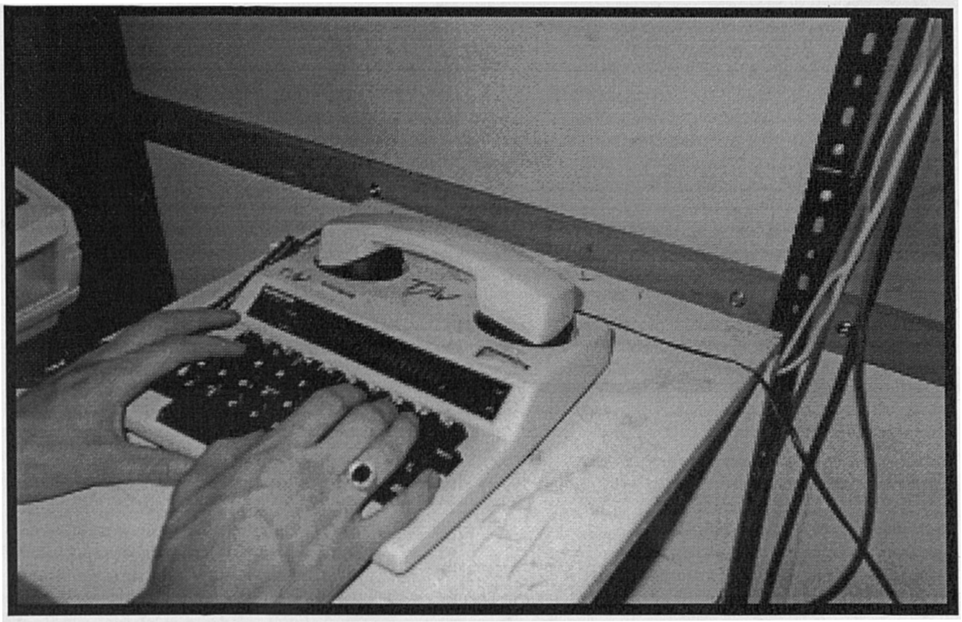

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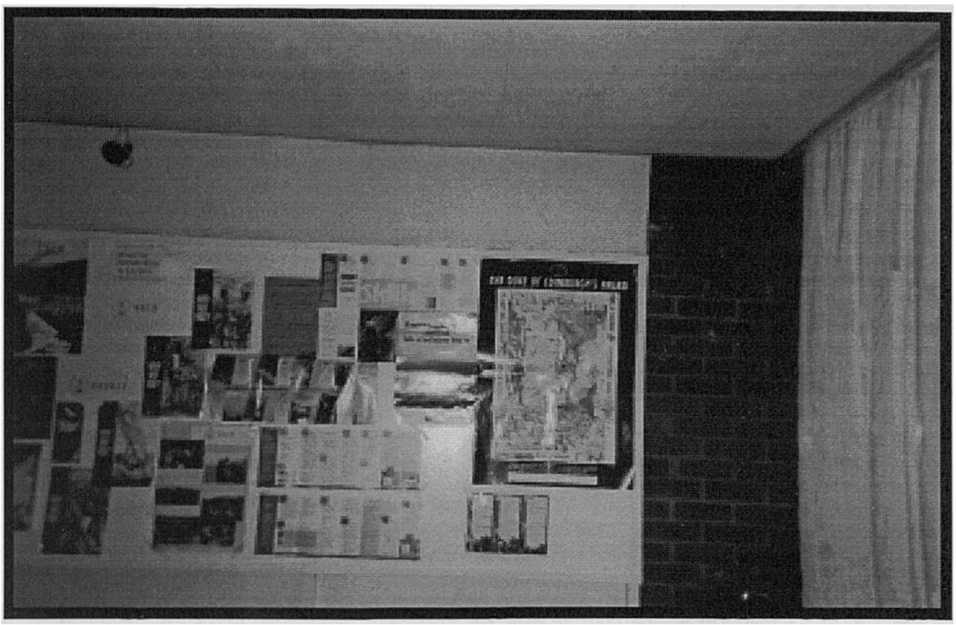
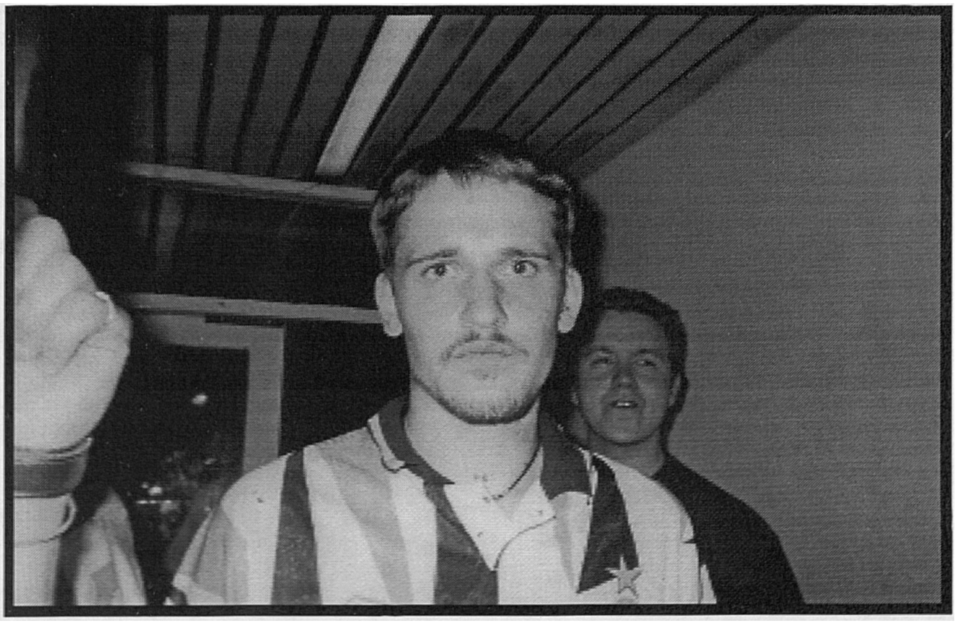
100 Paul (D)

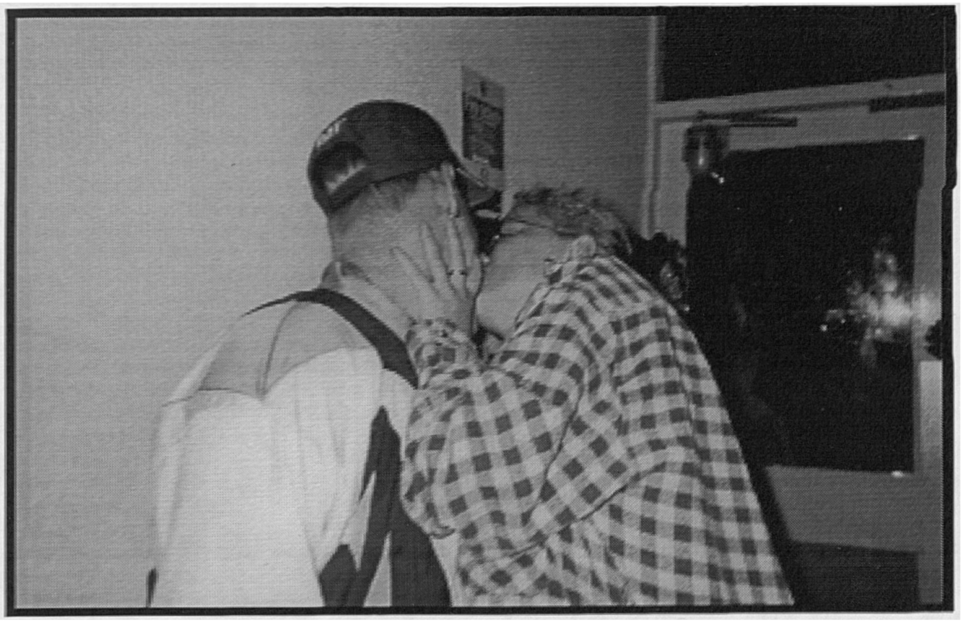


101 Paul (D)

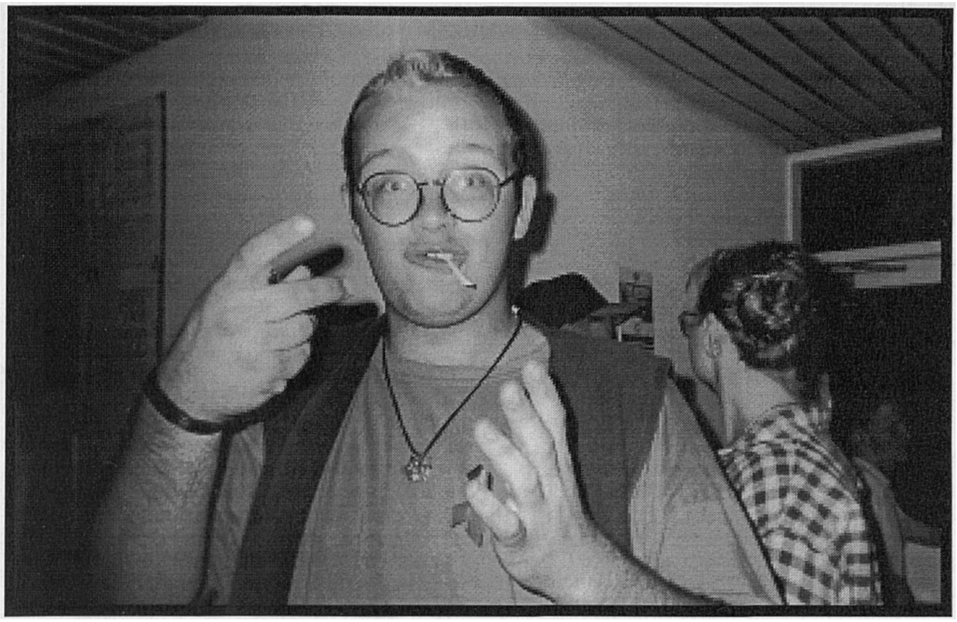
102 Paul (D)



103 Helen (D



104 Helen D



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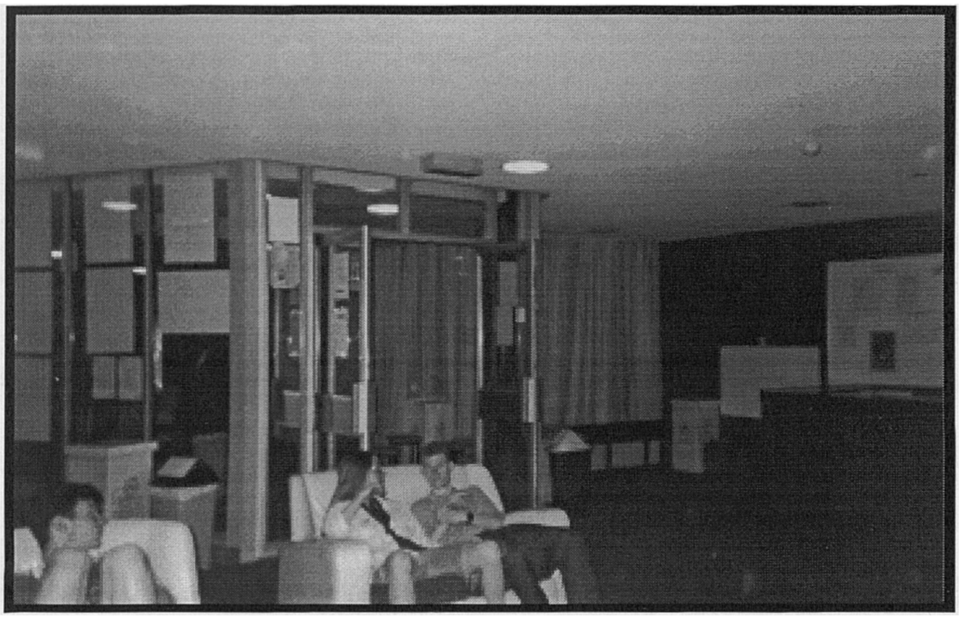

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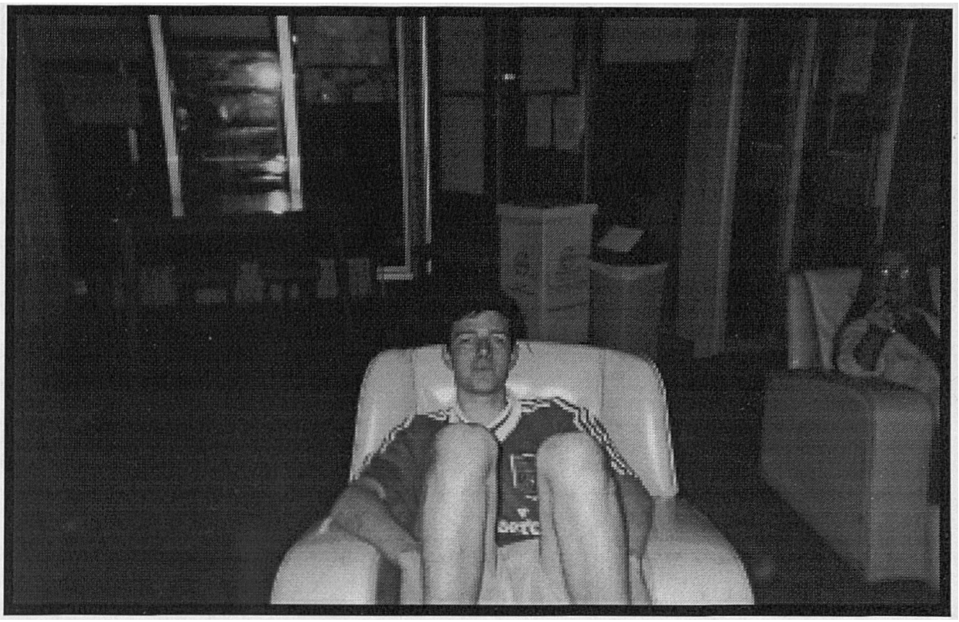

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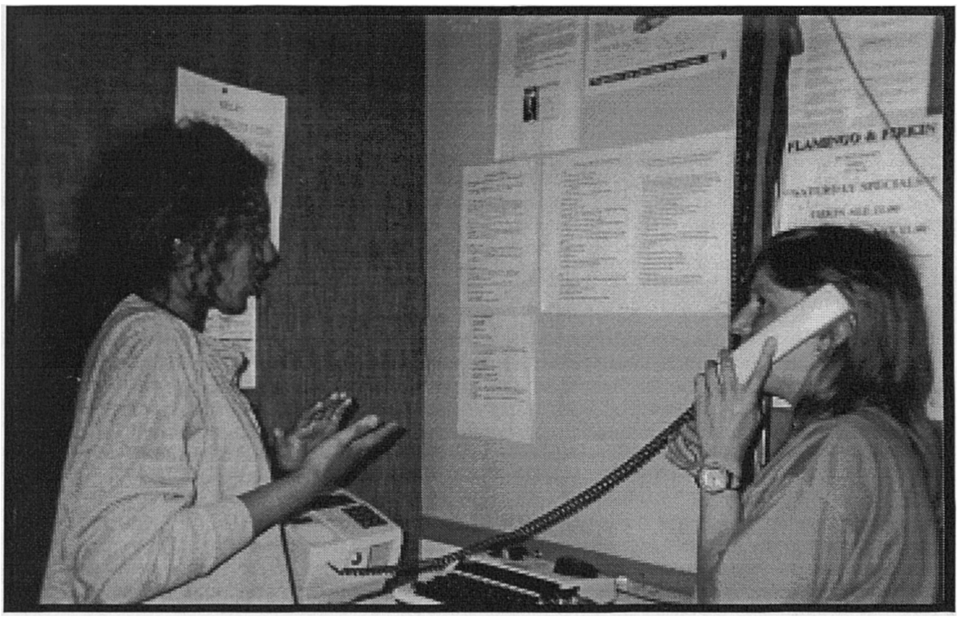
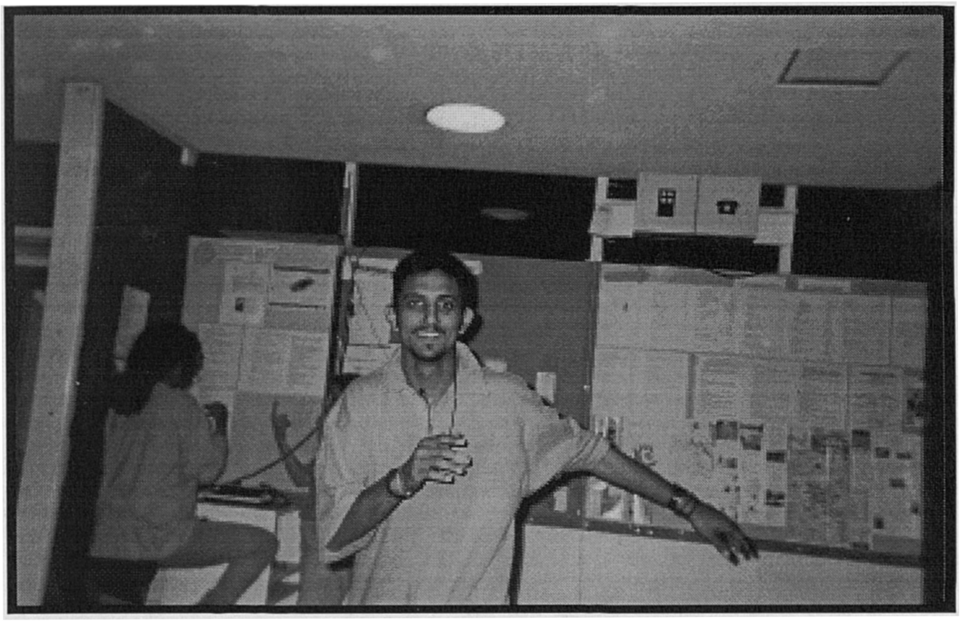


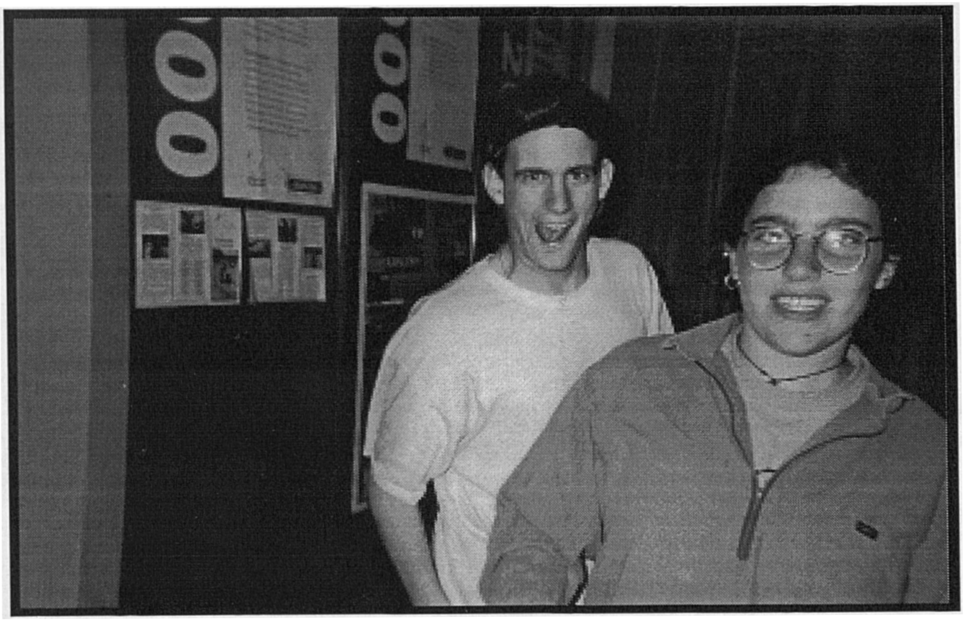
108 Helen (D)

109 Helen (D)



110 Helen (D)

111 Helen (D)



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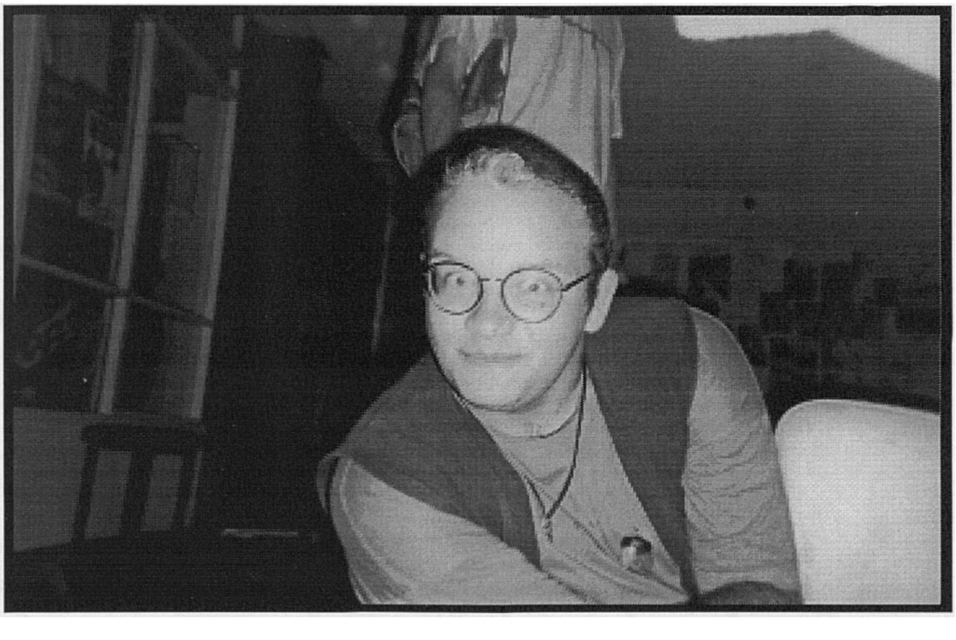
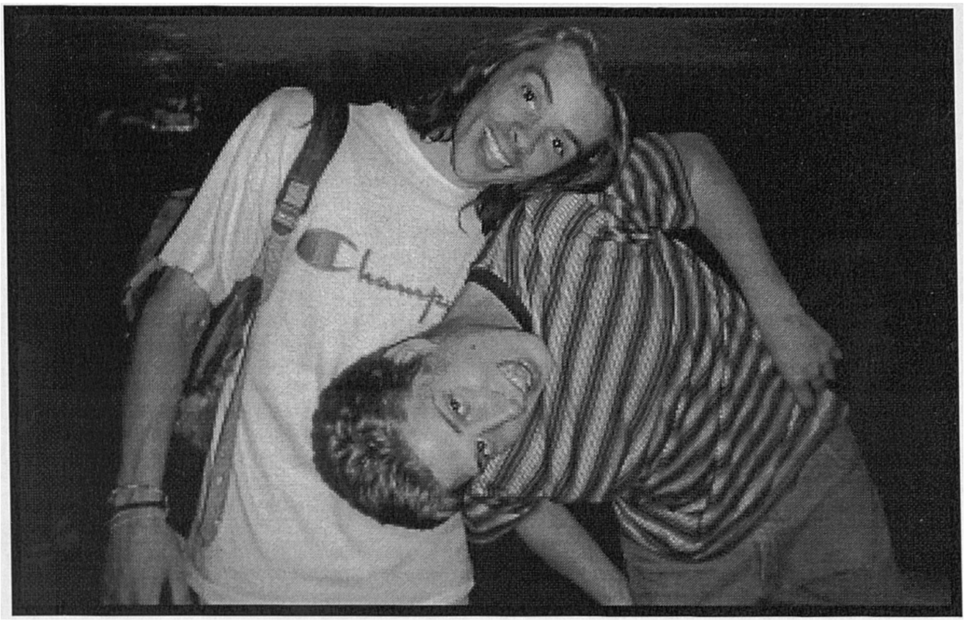


113 | 114 Helen (D)



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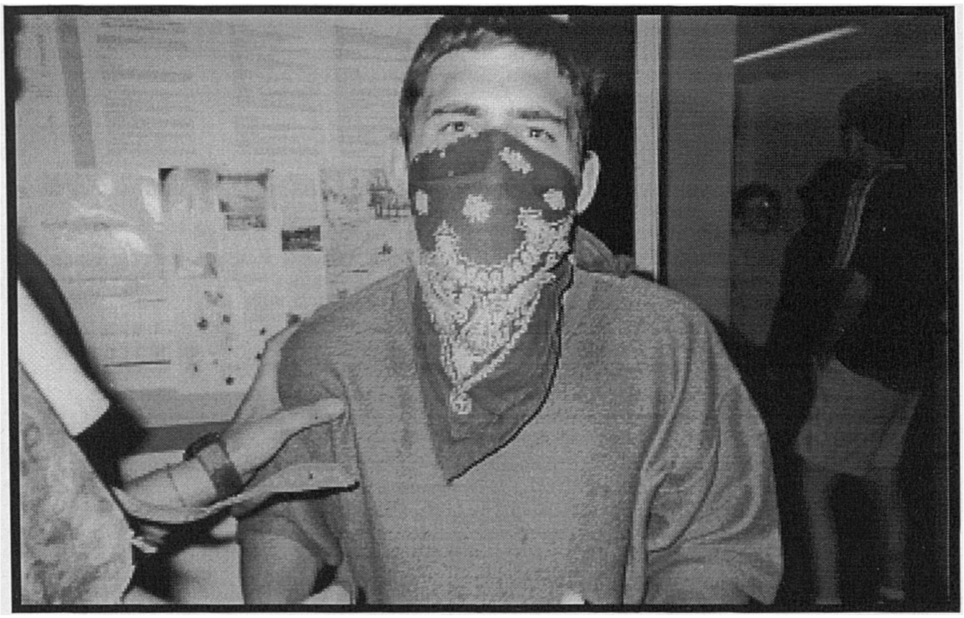

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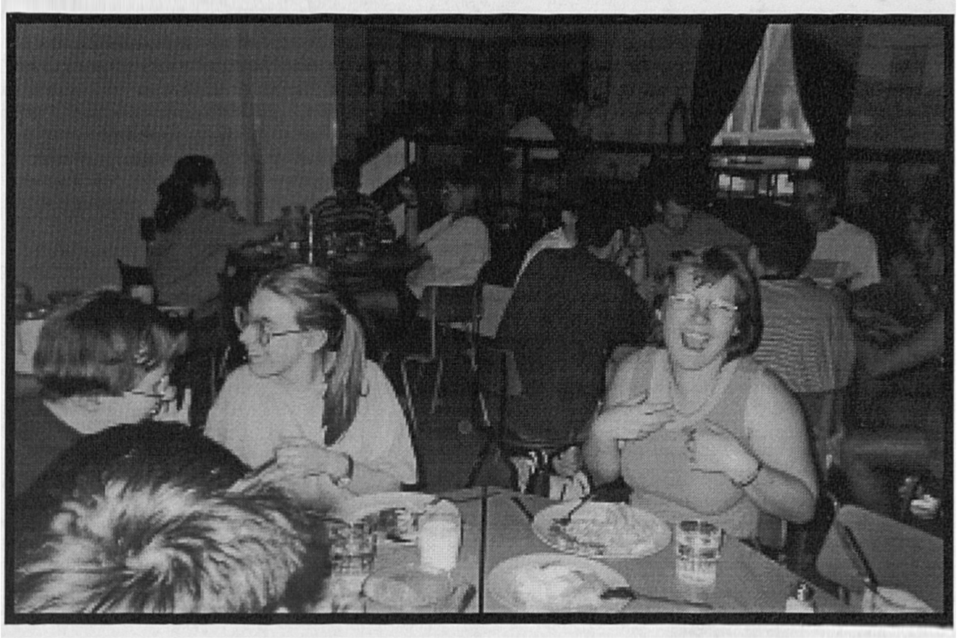

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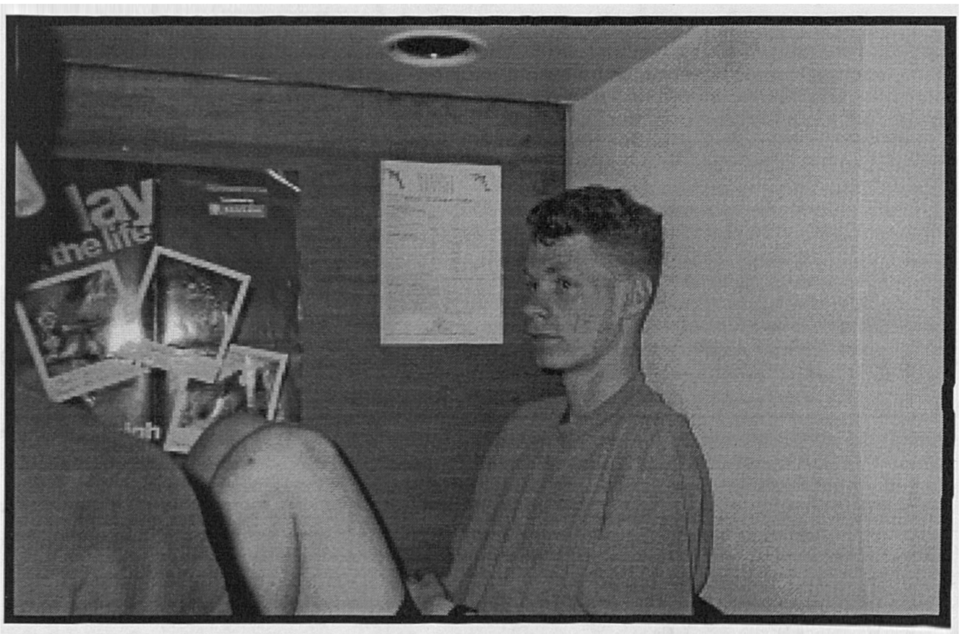
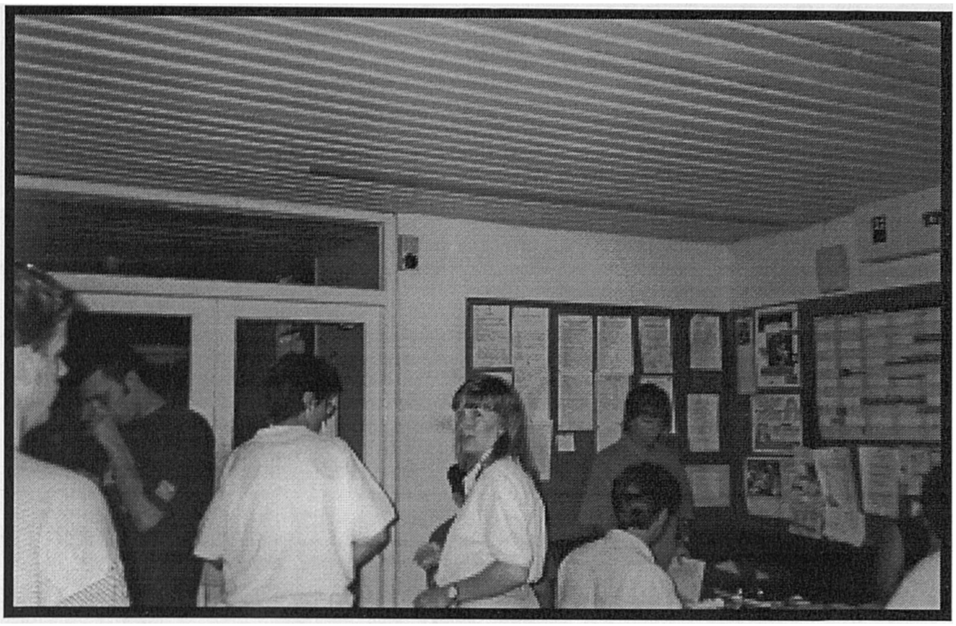


118 Chivonne (D)



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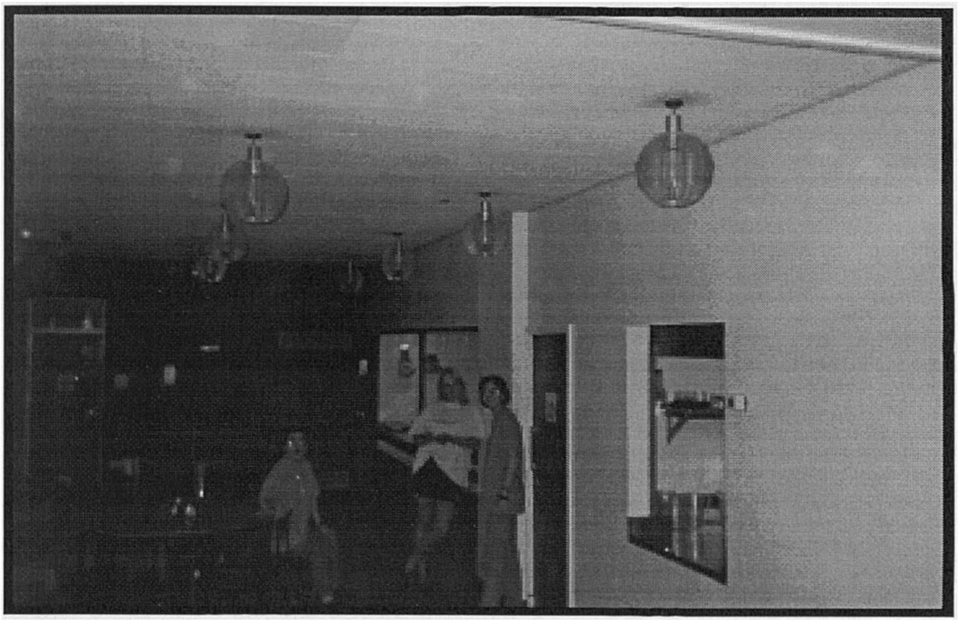

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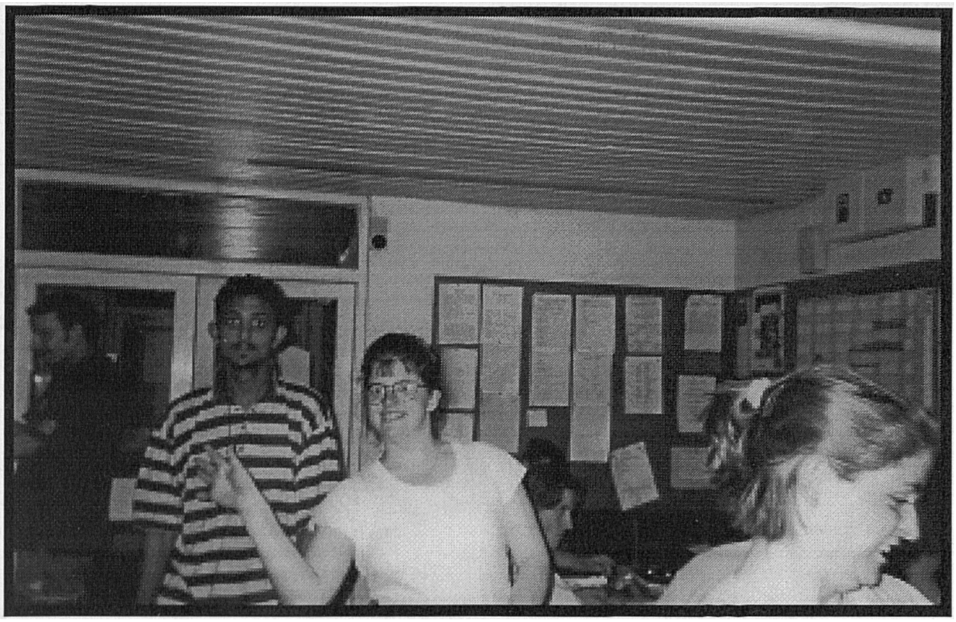

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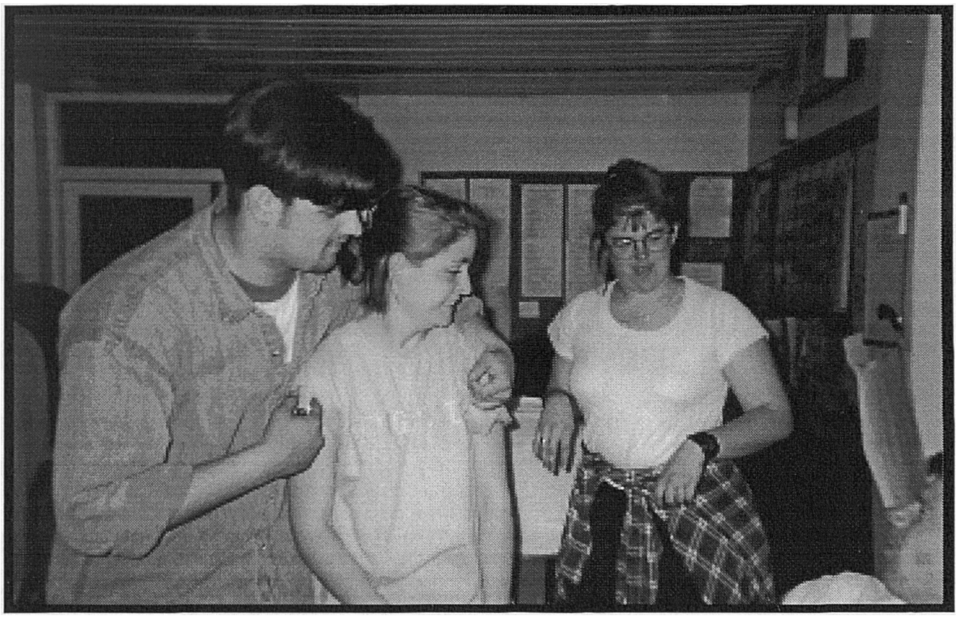

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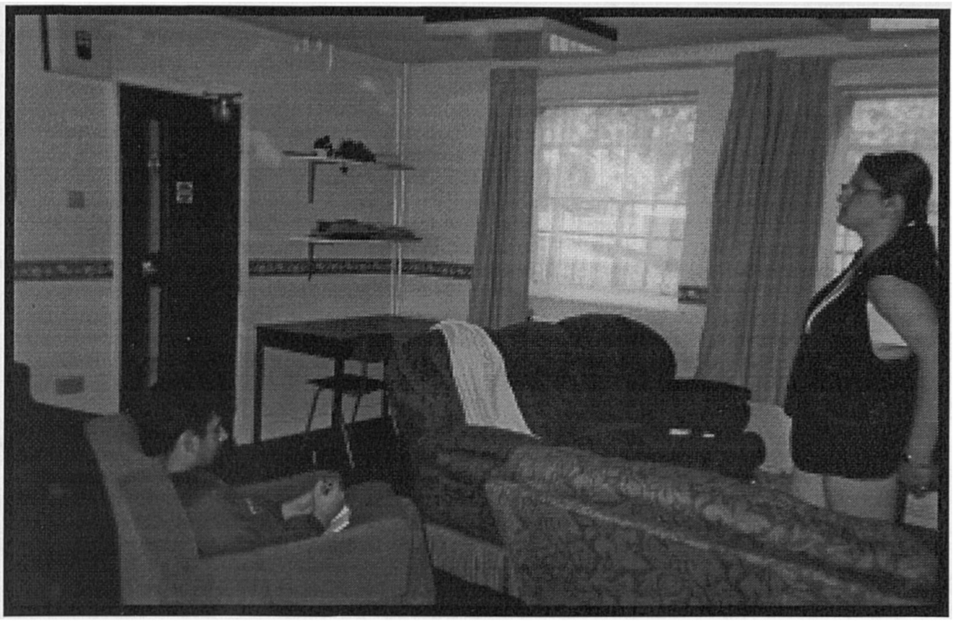

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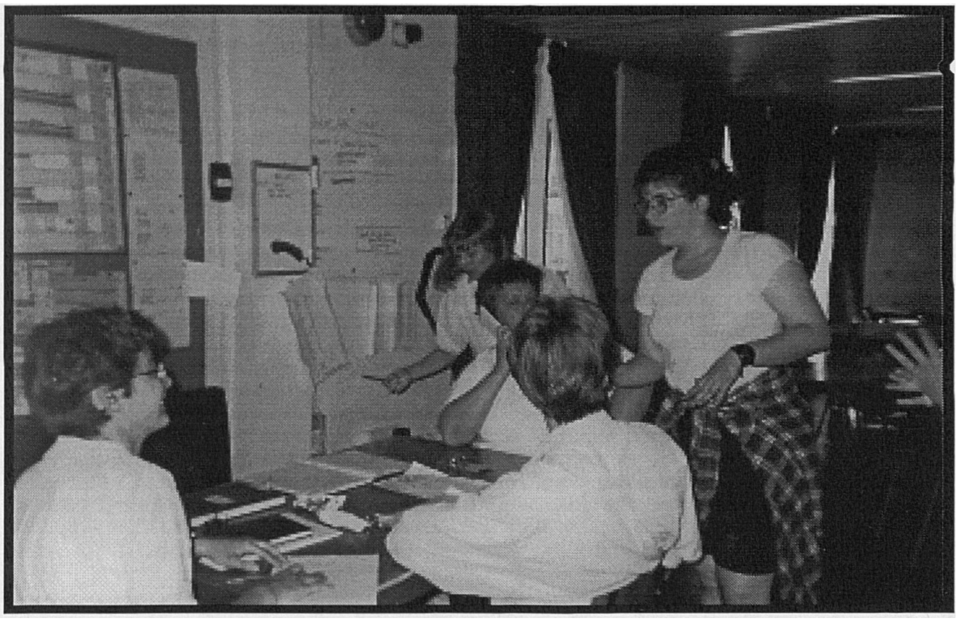

124 Chivonne (D)

The brief of the autophotography project

The first epigraph to this chapter is a useful reminder that I am not engaged here primarily with a journey of discovery of Deaf culture per se. As I indicated in the previous chapter, there is great potential within the Deaf community for a very particular visual cultural expression, one that is most easily identified in the graphic depictions and iconic exploits witnessed in sign language, but also likely to be located in similar exploitation of iconic form and symbolic meaning outside the sphere of language itself. But the exercise here is mainly one of exploring the potential use of photographs in uncovering elements of the particular visual perception shared collectively by Deaf people as part of such multidimensional social science as suggested by Alexander in the first epigraph. This chapter deals with shared characteristics of visual expression through photographs, not only in their content, but also, as it were, between the photographs, as forms of visible (dis)continuity expressed in the act of taking rather more photographs in a shorter space of time than casual photographers would normally undertake. The photographs can also be judged as the constitutive elements of photo-stories, graphic story-boards which often describe entirely ordinary events portrayed in momentous sequences through choices of timing and framing. Therefore the photographs form in a sense two sets of data: the photographs as independent representations of moments, and the sets of photographs as stories of events. I have followed this distinction most closely in the statistical analysis. Tables relating to this analysis and a short commentary can be found in the appendix. In this chapter, reference will be made to these tables in cases where there is quantitative evidence relative to the findings being discussed.

The 20 Deaf and hearing pupils who volunteered for this part of the study undertook to photograph according to the following brief:

> "1. This camera is available to you for two weeks. Please take care of it well.
>
> 2. I want to learn how you view your environment. I think that I can best learn that by asking you to take pictures yourself. Here is how I would like you to take the pictures:
>
> Select one single event in the next two weeks, such as a birthday or school party, an evening out with friends, or a sports match, and take all the pictures in the camera during that one occasion—that is, take twenty-four photographs during this one evening or event. Try to capture what happens photographically, much like a photo-story. It is very important that you do not ask people to pose for you, but let events happen naturally.
>
> Return the camera on Tuesday 20 June, with the full film inside it, to your teacher; processing will be arranged for you.

> 3. Your photographs will be used for research purposes only. You will receive a complete set of your pictures in due course. I will ask you questions about them."

This briefing had been made available to teachers beforehand, so that they could comment on the organisation of the project, on the English phrasing and the use of vocabulary, and could anticipate questions that might arise. In my own explanations to the pupils involved I stressed that I wanted them to take all the photographs in quick sequence (a maximum of a single morning, afternoon or evening), not only to enhance the potential of the photographs forming a photo-story, but equally because I hoped it would help the pupils to 'snap out' of casual photography mode, that is, to force them to concentrate for a particular period on the events they portrayed as a visual experience, and to concentrate on the act of photographing a sequence of events. On the whole I believe this strategy was successful: all the photographs genuinely seem to have been taken in short spaces of time.

After processing the films and returning the photographs to them, I invited the pupils to choose their four most favourite photographs in their own sets, list those from one to four, and enter a brief comment with each of them:

> "Thank you for taking the pictures and returning the camera. Here are the photographs you have taken. There are two sets of them: the first set, in the Boots cover, is for you to keep. The second set, in the albums, I need for research purposes. The photographs in the album are numbered. I would like you to do me one last favour:
>
> 1. Look through all the photographs in the album, and decide which four photographs you like best. Indicate your choice below.
> 2. Please explain in a few sentences why you have chosen each of the four photographs.
> 3. When you have finished, please return this form and the album to your teacher."

Altogether this project contributed a total of 439 photographs to the study, and a subset of 68 'favourite' photographs (table 6.1 overleaf).

Unfortunately Richard's film ended up in colour developer and was lost. John and David both declined my invitation to select their favourite photographs; I do not wish to speculate whether there was a common factor at work between John and David here and Lawrence in the previous chapter who also declined to select his favourite photographs. There does not seem to have been, at least not one obviously related to the social nature of visual perception or the idea of collective vision.

This chapter deals with a deeper, yet still exploratory, analysis of the photographs taken by these young people, and relates that analysis to their reasons for selecting certain photographs

hearing pupils		Deaf pupils	
Sarah	13	Farah	25
Fiona	26	Melanie	26
Andrew	25	John	25
Adam	25	Richard	–
Martin	15	Cheryl	23
Daniel W.	23	David	24
Daniel R.	25	Emma	21
Toni	26	Paul	23
Ami	25	Helen	21
Lalage	25	Chivonne	23
	228		211
Favourites	40		28

Table 6.1
Summary of distribution of photographs.

as their favourites. The focus in the chapter is on the photographs themselves. Furthermore, although the tables invite comparison between the Deaf pupils as a group and the hearing people as a group, and all the statistical analyses were undertaken with this distinction as the critical variable, I do not mean to carry through this distinction in terms of an oversimplified dichotomy between Deaf and hearing pupils. I am interested in the extent to which Deaf pupils differ from hearing pupils in their photographic expressions and interpretations in so far as it is indicative of that which is particular to and shared by the Deaf pupils collectively.

Although I am not in search of objectivity in the way Bourdieu apparently was when he carried out research into forms of popular photography (1990), he treated the statistical element in similar vein in that study as I have intended to do here. His dense description of statistics as a necessary 'moment' of the scientific process provides the opportunity for an otherwise uninvited aside to another such similar moment, that of the 'decisive moment' in photography itself:

> "The subjectivist intuitionism that seeks a meaning in the immediacy of lived experience would not be worth attending to for a moment if it did not serve as an excuse for objectivism, which limits itself to establishing regular relationships and testing their statistical significance without decipher-

> ing their meaning, and which remains a necessary but only a purely temporary moment of the scientific process." (Bourdieu 1990:2)

The 'moment' of statistical significance is similar to that of the decisive 'moment' of photography in that both claim to represent essences or to summarise information in easily accessible single units of representation (be they numbers or photographs), but which, indeed in both cases, are wholly pointless without consequent interpretation. In addition, I believe that, in the same way as there is unlikely to be just one single decisive moment which might be selected in any event, and in any case that moment can be witnessed from different viewpoints (any moment in any event is multi-dimensional), there is more than one moment and viewpoint in statistics. Bourdieu's claim to objectivity I feel should be judged in that stark light of relativism.

Similarly to its use in Bourdieu's study, the use of the statistical element in this chapter is in terms of the kind of support such measures of significance can contribute to qualitative analysis and interpretation. As I have already stated, the contribution of the hearing pupils is not to be judged in terms of them forming some kind of control group, with its associated discourse of 'normal' function in relation to which difference can be defined and described. Rather than any group of pupils forming a yardstick by which the performance of another group has been measured, all pupils in this study clearly contribute significant information about photographic representations of social events, but within the context of this study the research focus is on the contributions that particular elements in visual representation can make to the kind of questions that have been raised throughout this work about the social nature of Deaf people's visual perception. Therefore I will focus in particular on the contributions that have been made by the Deaf pupils.

Structured schemes of perception | collective vision

The 20 pupils had all been provided with a bottom of the range, fixed focus pocket camera loaded with a black-and-white 24 exposure film. All cameras were of the same model and included a flash, so that photographs could be taken indoors and at night. These camera provide photographs of a certain 'look', having a fixed lens, limited depth of field, and the kind of soft-focus character that results from the quality of the plastic lenses of about 1cm in diameter. As I explained in chapter 4, this does not mean that I have denied, although maybe limited, the possibility of self-expression, or the potential of a certain 'æsthetic'. As Bourdieu notes:

> "...even when the production of the picture is entirely delivered over to the automatism of the camera, the taking of the picture is still a choice involving æsthetic and ethical values: if, in the

> abstract, the nature and development of photographic technology *tend to make everything* objectively 'photographable', it is still true that, from among the theoretically infinite number of photographs which are technically possible, each group chooses a finite and well-defined range of subjects, genres and compositions." (Bourdieu 1990:6)

Bourdieu here also makes direct reference to the topic of this chapter, namely that which, to the pupils, is present as 'photographable' moments in particular sequences of events, events which in themselves provide infinite potential for representation. Notably, what is of interest here—as it was to Bourdieu—is the extent to which social factors guide the taking of the photographs and the kinds of expression:

> "Adequately understanding a photograph, whether it is taken by a Corsican peasant, a petit-bourgeois from Bologna or a Parisian professional, means not only recovering the meanings which it proclaims, that is to a certain extent, *the explicit intentions of the photographer; it also means* deciphering the surplus of meaning which it betrays by being a part of the symbolism of [a] group." (Bourdieu 1990:6–7)

This symbolism is described by Bourdieu as a system of schemes of perception, but the system also includes thought (ibid:6). This approximates my own approach throughout, although I have been referring to that form not as a system but rather as collective vision or perception. Within the context of a sociology of being Deaf it is less relevant that such conventional visual perception is systematic as than that it is collective; that is, collective vision has typical and conventional qualities as well as structuring qualities. Within the distinctly Marxist accounts provided by Bourdieu and his collaborators, there appears to be little escape from the 'system': popular photographic practice following Bourdieu is strictly engaged in on the basis of class commonalities and kinds of æsthetic judgement closely associated with class. Such an approach obscures the opportunity of *individual* choice and expression (a common criticism of Marxist accounts). The idea of collective vision allows for such individual expression, and allows, at least in theory, for interpretations of photographic expression as reflecting cultural distinction and renewal.

collective vision and taking photographs

Each pupil went about using their camera in the two weeks that it was available to them in a different way, closely related to the relatively stable patterning of events we call 'daily life'. The Deaf pupils were all residential students at a Deaf college, and from that college they 'fan out' daily to their various mainstream educational settings. Some additional teaching is made available at the college itself, but the mainstay of their education is in local educational establishments where the majority of pupils will be hearing young people. In the evenings they return to college in time for supper. The association of the hearing pupils with each other is, as it were, the direct opposite. They arrive at school in the morning, and in that sense they 'fan out' to their families and homes in the evening. Taking into consideration notions of the 'photographable', it is probably unsurprising that none of the pupils took photographs of their educational setting, that is, the kind of formal social interaction that goes on in the presence of a tutor and that is subject to strict temporal ordering and regulation. In part this may also be because taking such photographs would mean distinct interruption in the concentration of pupils on the kinds of activity which generally take place within classrooms, and would at least require the explicit and prearranged permission and co-operation of the tutor.

Out of the nine sets of photographs taken by the Deaf pupils, eight depict life in the college, and the ninth depicts a visit to the parental home, away from college (as well as including, near the end of the set, some photographs taken in college). Therefore, what is depicted is without exception outside the sphere of formal education, which occupies most of their day-time activities. Similarly, nine sets of photographs by the hearing group depict varying kinds of social events outside the sphere of formal education, and the tenth depicts time spent on school premises but outside official school hours. What therefore shows up remarkably consistently is the inverse relationship in which the Deaf pupils/photographers stand compared to the hearing pupils/photographers with regards to the subjects in the photographs that they have taken. In the case of the Deaf pupils, what brought them together, allowing me access to them as a group, was the fact that they all stayed in the same college. In the case of the hearing pupils, what brought them together was the fact that they all went to the same school, and in terms of their social life school seemed the only, or the main force, in bringing them together (as well of course as such related factors as age and living in a particular catchment area), whereas the group of Deaf pupils were inseparable even taking into account the context of the college. For many of the Deaf pupils it would seem that the photographs could have been taken by any of them. At first glance, to a casual observer the ordering of photographs in the majority of their sets is haphazard, although further inspection reveals individual differences in approach and expression. The Deaf pupils' photographs of their social environments depict a world turned in on itself, a world comprising an aggregate of people which includes many other residents of the college, including house-parents, tutors and administrative staff. Within this larger aggregate, the pupils taking photographs and their peers form a cohesive and pivotal collective, with seemingly much the same visual interests in their environment. Here again resurfaces the idea of scopic social space, this time that of the Deaf college. The space is open, fluid and bustling with much the same potentially confusing visual information as is the social space of the younger generation in the local Deaf club. All but two sets reflect this pattern, and mostly it is reflected right from photograph one to the last one in the set.

In sharp contrast, the hearing pupils' photographs only contain incidental, or occasional, reference to other pupils who had been taking photographs. Most of their activity reflected a form of dissociation from fellow-students in their 'free' time outside the confines of schooling, and the sets depict a wide range of activity, such as going to a pub, for a picnic with friends, to a football match, or to a music practice. The photographs within the sets appear as highly ordered sequences of events: mixing up the negatives in different sets of photographs would in many instances have severely disrupted the original sequencing of data.

In so far as the photographs are indicative of the social activities of the pupils, they are similarly indicative of particular, distinct approaches to taking photographs. These differences are not only reflected in the kinds of topics available socially, but also in different ways of framing and forming compositions within each and every single photograph. There are also differences in the temporal sequencing of events and the patterning and organising distribution of visual elements throughout the photographs as a cohesive set, a photographic 'story'.

In addition to the fact that there are differences in the approaches to photographing events between hearing and Deaf pupils, what is notable is that there is within each group a great degree of conformity and similarity in these approaches. Collective vision not only surfaces in the content of the photographs taken, as well as in the attitudes displayed towards the photographer (as was my own experience detailed in chapter 5), but it is carried even stronger by the act of photography itself, the taking of photographs as a mode of depiction and self-expression, despite the nature of the photographic act as a ceremonial performance subject to strict popular convention.

Table 1 in the appendix contains the results of a detailed quantitative analysis of change between the consecutive photographs in the 20 sets. Out of the 10 variables analysed, nine are identified as significant on the Pearson chi-square test with values ranging from x^2 106.43 ($p < .00$) to x^2 3.4 ($p = .06$).

The most important variable is undoubtedly that of 'continuity', which provides an indication of change in pictorial elements between consecutive photographs. A photograph was indicated as showing continuity with the previous one in the set when any element of the foreground, or a clearly orienting pictorial element, had been wholly or partially retained (that is, had been repeated from the previous photograph). The photographs of the Deaf pupils reveal mostly change (59%), whereas the photographs of the hearing pupils reveal a marked preference for continuity (88%).

The Deaf college as scopic social space

It is clear from the photographs that the college plays an important role in the lives of the Deaf pupils. There is a Deaf club in the same town, but I was told that this club was mainly frequented by another (older) generation with an interest in the kind of highly ceremonialised and strictly regulated popular activities also favoured by the older generation in the Deaf club I photographed, such as playing bingo. Rather than going to this Deaf club the pupils have created an active youth club on the premises of the college, which apparently frequently attracts local Deaf youngsters not in residence at the college itself. However, none of the photographs depict such an occasion of youth club socialising or activity. Most of the photographs do appear to have been taken during weekends, or in the evenings during the week. As I described, there is a high level of agreement in the ways the photographs have been taken. There are eight sets depicting college-life, and one of these sets are photographs taken inside a pupil's private room (photographs 79–81). The remainder, seven sets, all portray the college in a similar manner, although often focusing on different aspects of college life. For example, Melanie took all her photographs during one single mealtime (which also shows that the brief had been understood and correctly pursued, see photographs 53–60). This set is a-typical in that it shows an easily identifiable event, mealtime, and therefore depicts the activity in one single room, the dining room. Otherwise many elements are shared with the other seven sets. For example, there is frequent interaction with the camera (photograph 53), and frequent posing with a high level of affect (photographs 54 and 56). This level of affect is statistically significant. Deaf pupils are more responsive to being photographed, and this was found to be the case both in an analysis of all the photographs (table 2, dynamic force, x^2 34.99, $p <.05$) as well as in the analysis of the favourite photographs (table 3, affect, x^2 13.32, $p <.05$). Since in this latter variable the items on the variable are ordinal in character, a Mann-Whitney z-test was also performed and equally shows significance (table 3, affect:, z -3.11, $p <$ .05).

Other than the occasion of the shared meal, there are no elements or visual strategies employed to tie the photographs in any particular sequence. The viewpoint of the photographer is a shifting one, in which there is little 'overlap' of elements between photographs other than those which are provided by the context of the architecture of the room and the regular appearance made by plates of food and drinks et cetera. This is to say, there has been no attempt to 'follow' any particular sequence of events such as signed conversation, or any one particular person taking a meal. In the latter case this could be done, for example, by taking pictures of people going in to the room, starting to queue in front of the kitchen area, receiving plates of food, finding a table, eating the food, and so on. Rather, the kind of continuity in representation as measured in the statistical analysis (table 1) has been totally ignored. Both choices of framing and subject matter appear haphazard if not random, although there is a distinct focus on people. The occasion of the mealtime appears merely an excuse to be able to photograph people engaged in ordinary daily interaction. As Melanie notes about one of her photographs:

> "Lot of students eat dinner, talk each other." (photograph 59, third choice).

More than once photographs were singled out because they showed Deaf youngsters simply "chatting". As Helen noted:

> "See Deaf young people get together have a brill chat!" (photograph 113, fourth choice).

Melanie's most favourite photograph, however, is the one photograph in the set not taken in the dining room, and shows a kind of posing which closely emulates the kind of posing witnessed in the set of photographs I took of Mr. Phillips (photograph 13 in chapter 5), a posing which probably is equally spontaneous:

> "They are nice smile and lovely picture." (photograph 54, first choice).

That posing is an important ingredient in photographic representation is further supported by Melanie's second choice, which she chose for similar æsthetic reasons:

> "Their are nice picture because it very close face and good shape." (photograph 56, second choice).

Note, furthermore, that Melanie does not provide any social grounds for taking the photographs in the last two comments, such as for example that these people are friends, or behaved in any particular way which warranted a photograph. Rather, her comments are entirely on visual characteristics of the photograph as depiction: the faces are in close-up and of good shape. As it so happens, the photograph is a very clear triangular composition—showing a single triangle formed by the three faces, fully exploiting the maximum space, without doubt the strongest, most cohesive way of arranging visual elements within a frame. The only element distracting attention away from the faces is the dark wooden door with the 'no smoking' sign only just visible, a tangible reminder that this is a public space.

Exploitation of frontal and central compositions is stronger in Deaf pupils' photographs, with the photographs of the hearing pupils revealing more peripheral distribution of foreground elements, although the level of significance is weak (p = .05).

Visual expression and language preference

Because of her background Helen is somewhat unique within the group of Deaf pupils taking photographs. Her parents, she indicates, are both fluent BSL users, although their profession would suggest a likelihood of them being hearing. Her mother is a teacher of Deaf children and her father a social services interpreter in SSE (SSE=Sign Supported English). Helen indicates that she has been using BSL since before the age of ten, but it is not possible to deduce from the information provided whether or not her parents served as linguistic role-models to her. It would not be without precedent for her parents to have developed an interest in BSL in view of their daughter's status, leading to career-moves in due course. From Helen's answers it is clear that she has both awareness of Deaf issues and strongly associates with the Deaf community. She has developed a historical awareness of being Deaf, one in which Deaf people 'used' hearing people to their benefit:

> "Show the way deaf use hearing people to ring for them long time ago and see now minicom." (photograph 108, second choice).

There may well be an undertone of pride in this quote. Her most favourite photograph is not only a skillfully recorded portray, it is chosen because it shows signing:

> "See his *personity and he is sign not pose and it looked natural!*" (photograph 105, first choice).

Here is an explicit claim that signing is natural (that is, normal and intuitive), but Helen also perceives there to be a clear connection between the expression of personality and the act of signing, as did Melanie in her photograph of a person signing her name (chapter 2). Predictably, the portrayal of signing in the photographs of the Deaf pupils is significant (table 3, x^2 6.9, p = 0.3). There is also a significant preference for favouring photographs with signs in the choices of Deaf pupils, and here the level of significance increases (table 2, x^2 21.39, p = 0.0).

To my surprise Helen did not highlight photograph 109, showing two fellow-students in humorous engagement with her as photographer. The signs shown by both pupils is a possible sign for 'taking a photograph', with the thumbs being pressed down on the shutter-release button. The non-manual features of both are in extraordinary agreement, showing an abnormally intensified act of gazing, or even blunt staring. As a 'take' on the photographic act this is very similar to that of the chairman of the Deaf club in photograph 57 in chapter 5 while I myself was taking photographs of Dawn. In both cases there is a making of the photographic subject, through the signing of people who are themselves subjects of the photographs taken. In the case of Helen, it is she (or the viewer) who becomes the 'photographed', whereas in the case of Dawn she has become the subject twice-over, being both subject of my actual photographic attention and that of the chairman's signed attention. In both cases, the signed interaction provides the locus for the subversion of a photographic gaze, even a reversal of direction of that gaze, with an effectiveness not often realised in photographs.

Otherwise, Helen's set is a good example of a particular treatment of the kind of photographic sequencing she shares with most of the other Deaf pupils who took photographs. She moves seemingly randomly around, providing little continuity between photographs in either subject matter or framing, and there is a ubiquity of forms of posing (often humorous) with high affect (photographs 114–115). The concentration is on people, but without any sustained focus on social activity or events.

These same elements are expressed in the photographs of Emma-Jane, including a play on the photographic act itself:

> "I find this picture very interesting because whatever I do he copy, it sound like it." (photograph 88, first choice)

Although this play with the visual is her favourite photograph, she uses the odd expression "sound like". Emma-Jane is the only person in the set who indicates that she does not communicate in BSL with her parents and instead indicates a preference for SSE (Sign Supported English). Emma-Jane's phrasing is probably more like hearing people's English than the phrasing of the other Deaf pupils. Such background information might suggest preference for and higher proficiency in engaging with a hearing environment—but this is not confirmed by her photographs. The photographs provide strong support of her being Deaf in visuality at least, in the choices she has made during photographing as well as in making the kind of selections she did. This finds further confirmation in her use of the capital 'D' in noting the reason for her fourth choice:

> "It look very good because this picture shows that the college is very good for Deaf people." (photograph 93, fourth choice).

Although, in assessing the quote alone, she might not necessarily include herself under the term 'Deaf people', the agreement between her own photographs and the other sets of photographs about Deaf college life securely grounds her visual perception and expression within the collective vision of the Deaf pupils in the college. Her photographs display the same qualities, from the recording of spontaneous posing to shifting viewpoints, places, people and events in an apparently random manner (photographs 85–87).

Research which assesses the linguistic development of deaf children who are taught a similar form of signing to that which Emma-Jane prefers offers support to what can be claimed about the orientation of Emma-Jane's visuality. There is some evidence of this type in a study by Supalla

(1991), when he finds that children who are taught a form of signing which follows English grammatical rules and linear structure (SEE, Signed Exact English) nevertheless change the grammatical structures used by their teachers (and their own parents) in favour of structures which have more spatially oriented patterning. Supalla concludes that:

> "The problems with [Signed Exact English] seem to center on its learnability—that is, structures may not be tuned to the visual perception and processing vital for natural language acquisition in deaf children. [...] Further research is needed to find out what modality specific constraints exist, but for the present, it is safe to conclude that the role of modality in signed language development can no longer be overlooked." (Supalla 1991:109)

Farah is the only person who does not concentrate entirely on aspects of Deaf college life, although the last part of the film shows photographs taken on her return to college from a visit to her family at home for a birthday celebration. Two of her four favourite photographs are taken inside the college, and again the reasons for taking both photographs reveal æsthetic preference rather than socially based thinking:

> "I like the picture because there is good (refex) refection to mirror, her face look good." (photograph 51, second choice).
>
> "It is look relax and happy." (photograph 52, third choice).

Photograph 51 in particular shows considered and explicit expression of visual elements, an engagement with visual perception as well as showing a strong sense of composition.

Gendered focus

Farah's reasons for choosing the other two photographs are both more in line with practices associated mostly with family albums (photograph 50, fourth choice). In this photograph Farah also negated the purpose of the brief, by having her photograph taken by another member of the family. There almost appears to be a split between the kind of photographs she went on to take in college, and the kind of staged formal posing that goes on while at home (photograph 45). Farah is also being photographed twice (on another occasion) by another pupil equipped with a camera, Cheryl, and these photographs show a different aim or intent, that of model-photography (photograph 72–73). None of this kind of photography—photographs taken outside (or at least on the periphery) of the popular snapshot—appeared in any of the hearing pupils' photographs. The poses struck by Farah on these occasions are not only informed by a particular form of 'glamour' photography, they are as such indicative of a particular conventional reference to and focus on gender difference through a form of posing which is suffused with suggestive symbolism.

Such referentially focused photographs can be found only in the sets of photographs taken by the Deaf pupils, although mostly in the taking of photographs-of-photographs. These include photographs of pin-up photographs (photographs 77–78) or photographs showing pages of 'top-shelf' magazines (photographs 79, 94). However, there are also photographs of intimate kissing (photographs 104, 111).

In so far as it refers to sexual as well as social awareness, particularly noticeable is a photographic close-up focusing on the wearing of an Aids ribbon (photograph 92). An Aids ribbon is also being worn by Farah during her trip home (photograph 50), as well as while posing on campus (photograph 72). The wearing of Aids ribbons is indicative of an otherwise unqualifiable level of awareness. The lack of access that Deaf people initially had to information on Aids, including its relationship to sexual activity, led the BDA to set up an Aids-awareness agency. If these photographs are an indication, this agency has had some impact within the Deaf community. But maybe this recording of an Aids ribbon is also a visually symbolic act, that is, Aids ribbons provide instantaneous visual access to an aspect of someone's character and social engagement.

The story-telling aspect of the photographs as sets

I will attempt here to provide an explanation of why the Deaf pupils may be treating the representation of events in a significantly different manner from that witnessed in the sets of photographs taken by the hearing pupils (table 1 in the appendix). What I am advancing here is the idea that Deaf pupils do not construct stories as being located at any particular point of view (i.e. there is no Albertian 'window' through which events can be seen to'unfold') but rather they construct events as a collection of visually represented situations of which the photographer is part. That which is being expressed is also being expressed in different narrative forms by Deaf and hearing pupils. Whereas, in the case of hearing pupils, stories are being told from the viewpoint of a narrator placed outside the sequence of events being depicted, the Deaf pupils reported on here express themselves in a more Brechtian fashion, as situated within an environment, and as part of events taking place. There are therefore also small but potentially significant differences in narrative expression when the photographs are judged in terms of their forming the constitutive elements of a 'set' of photographs, and I will turn to this treatment first.

The sequential ordering of photographs as narrative form

Most of the sets of photographs recorded by the hearing pupils partaking in the study reveal a linear and sequential ordering, in which the meaning of each individual photograph is subsumed by the wider meaning of the photographs as a set. In these cases, individual photographs mostly refer to aspects of a particular event, by which, incidentally, I do not mean to imply that the individual photographs taken in isolation are therefore meaningless.

The photographs taken by Toni (photographs 1–6) show a series of referents, namely referents to the narrated meaning of 'going to the pub'. This narrative is being told in a photographic ordering of moments which inevitably construct that reading, namely people walking down the street, standing in front of a pub and entering, and being inside standing in front of a bar. Another set, that of Daniel R. (photographs 28–33), shows a story recounted in similarly referential visual imagery. This is a family outing, shown through a sequence of photographs which depict packing the car, unpacking the car upon arrival (there is a traditional 'cut' here which bypasses the potential tedium of travel) and showing where it is they arrived at: a boating lake. Daniel's story is a neatly closed book when (photographs 34–36) the same sequence is depicted almost in reverse, when the family packs up and heads home. There is no point even in showing the arrival home, since the narrative form predicts that outcome as surely as it guides us from photograph to photograph with great sense of continuity. The same referential narrative framework is followed by Martin in showing a football training-session (photographs 38–42), and in the photographs taken by Adam, who went to see a football match (photographs 19–24). In fact, such opening and/or closing sequences which refer to conventional narrative canons (going to the pub, going out, going on an outing, going to see a football match) can be found in most of the ten sets of photographs taken by the hearing pupils.

It is particularly in the opening sequences that a linearly progressive and sequential narrative development takes place, since the sequencing of events in a social space such as a pub becomes both less clearly defined and less relevant. To an extent one is 'passing time', and portrayal along time's linear sequentiality becomes less pertinent. But in all these cases, the viewer is a witness to the life of others in the form of a narrated story which begins by setting the context, and is being granted temporary access to the events being portrayed through the photographic capturing of one of the participants to those events. A purely practical problem with aiming to depict a 'finished' narrative is that the film in the camera provides a definite number of possible photographs, so that these need to be 'spaced' sensibly over an event which is potentially less predictable in terms of time. It may then occur that there are no more photographs left to finish the narrative, such as in the set of photographs taken by Adam, who depicts going to a football match, but appears to run out of film during the match and is therefore unable to show what occurred after the match. Equally, it may be that there is plenty of film left when the narrative is perceived to be finished, such as seems to be the case in the set of photographs taken by Sarah, who simply stops after taking 14 out of 24 photographs and leaves the rest of the film blank. This also happened to the set of photographs taken by Daniel W., who changes topic, from playing football to taking two similar photographs of his house to fill up the film—to not 'waste film' is itself a well known dictum in popular uses of photography.

Elsewhere in the photographs of some hearing pupils, the intended referential meaning a photograph is supposed to convey is frustrated by the fact that the photograph being discussed depicts something that falls short of the meaning that is associated with it:

> "I like this photo as it is an action photo—unfortunately Scotty missed the penalty (outside of the left-hand post)." (photograph 26, fourth choice).
>
> "My friends and I take the mickey out of this boy." (photograph 16, second choice).

Here the depictions do not appear to support the claims being made on their behalf. In the context of the kind of photographs we have come to expect, we would probably fail to recognise the first as an action photo without the verbal comment reminding us that it is such.

In another example, a photograph was not selected for its own qualities, but because it had served a particular practical purpose in the context of the sequence of events during which it was taken:

> "Because I took the picture so he would miss, and he did." (photograph 44, first choice).

Martin's is an almost ocularcentrist approach, a complete disregard for any qualities a photograph might have, showing instead a shrewd recognition of the fact that many people are, if momentarily and in this case quite literally, wrong-footed when finding themselves the focus of the attentions of a photographer. Here there is only narrative, and the visual elements of the photograph are left unacknowledged. The photograph is unable to portray the events referred to by Martin, but nevertheless to Martin the photograph is inexorably linked to the event he describes. What these latter comments share is that they present the photographs as moments in a narrative which extends not only beyond any single photograph but beyond the set. Instead of commenting on an isolated photograph as a finished piece of information in its own right, these photographs taken by hearing pupils are used as referents to a strictly regulated account which does not exist visually in the photographs but rather exists outside the photographs, as a memory, or as a story told beyond the photographic moment. Those moments may be more or less significant, but they are essentially located rather precariously in a narrowly defined context, that explained by the actual sequence of events or that told by the comments which accompany specific photographs. In some cases, photographs serve as *aides-de mémoires* or prompts, as a particular instance of a generalised 'image' of those events, serving to evoke particular memories associated with those events. In short, I suggest that the photographs are incidental references to stories which exist in a more complete or exhaustive form elsewhere, in the history of the events portrayed or in the memories of those who took the photographs.

Photographs as mnemonic devices

As I have just suggested, another notion of 'time' that hearing pupils append to the photographs is the popularly exploited ability of photographs to bring back memories, or to suggest the past. This sense is reflected in the kinds of claims that hearing pupils, but none of the Deaf pupils, make on behalf of their selected photographs.

Sarah depicts a day spent picnicking in an idyllic environment with a few friends. Her first choice is the first photograph in her set:

> "Start of day—good group photo" (photograph 7, first choice).

This is a comment on the quality of the photograph as showing the start of an event as well as a comment on the æsthetic quality of the picture. Often pictures are chosen for reasons going deeper than the iconic elements of the photograph itself would otherwise be able to support; the photograph serves as a prompt, or a mnemonic device:

> "The whole band—an image I will always remember" (photograph 9, fourth choice).

This is a more explicit reference to the photograph as a mnemonic device. What Fiona refers to in this quote is not, I claim, that she will always remember this particular 'image' (that is, picture). What she will always remember is a more general, fluid kind of memory-image of the band, gathered during all the occasions she was part of that band. This picture will, in an imagined or foreseen future context, serve as a stimulus to bring back those memories, to re-construct a past, and it is this practical function that Fiona here highlights, proposing the ability of this photograph to prompt a host of past experiences despite being itself nothing more than a depiction of a mere fleeting and insignificant moment: she quite rightly refers in this context to the photograph as 'an image'.

As Andrew comments:

> "We look very studious! It shows lots of our instruments and tells a little tale: coffee, guitars, laid back players, music papers and erm... holes in jeans!" (photograph 27, third choice).

In addition to referring explicitly to the photograph as 'telling a tale', what Andrew appears to be referring to is an 'image' in the sense of style, the idea of self-image or group-image as defined by culture, to the image as the public construction of identity. Hidden behind a simulated embarrassment of there being a hole in someone's jeans is the depiction of being 'cool', or "laid back", as references to youth culture. This photograph is recommended by Andrew as symbolising a youth culture which he here idolises by his mention of particular qualities associated with it, an air of studiousness, musicality and lots of black coffee, the referents to which can clearly be found in the photograph itself. This photograph (and its accompanying commentary) is in the use of 'secondary referents' directly comparable to photographs of the Deaf pupils discussed next, but nevertheless this photograph still takes its place as a constitutive element of a larger event which Andrew attempts to present in linear sequence across all the photographs in his set.

The compilation of single photographs as narrative form

In the case of Deaf pupils the priorities appear to be of a different order. Chivonne's first six photographs (118–123) do not provide an easy or obvious way into the narrative in which she engages the viewer. Rather, she shows what seem to be unconnected or haphazard moments in events going on around her. These moments do not join up into any coherent, linear sequence, so that instead of following an unfolding narrative, the viewer focuses on each and every photograph in its own right. Because Chivonne does not seem to be following any particular recognisable event in a linear temporal fashion, but rather turns, moves and shifts while taking pictures, the impression becomes one of a spatial and simultaneous construction of an environment rather than a linear and sequential unfolding of a story. Helen's first six photographs are similar to Chivonne's and in both cases (as in the others) the first six pretty much set the scene of what is to come (photographs 103–108). Exactly the same can be said of the photographs of Emma-Jane (photographs 82–87) and those of Paul (96–101) as well as the photographs of all the other Deaf pupils. Farah's photographs follow the same pattern of presentation but for her brief linearly sequenced portrayal of a birthday celebration (photographs 46–49) at home. These three photographs are the only exception to this pattern found among the sets of the Deaf pupils. The sets of photographs recorded by Deaf pupils, I would suggest, cannot be judged as a traditional, linearly sequenced portrayal of an event in which isolated photographs have less communicative value than when they are seen within the ordering context of the other photographs. Instead they constitute a compilation of photographs which refer to something in their own right.

The photographs in the sets recorded by Deaf pupils provide open-ended impressions of what college-life is like as a visual-spatial environment, but the organisation of the photographs is different from that in the photographs of the hearing pupils. Occasionally photographs focus on something which produces its own meaning, such as in the case of the photograph of an Aids ribbon, as I have pointed out: such photographs are visual referents to things which serve, so to speak, as 'secondary referents'. This is also the case in the example of the use of the text telephone (photograph 108, but see also photograph 98), Emma-Jane's argument that the college is good for Deaf people (photograph 93), Melanie's depiction of the connection between person and sign-name (photograph 60), Helen's comment on the connection between personality and signing (photograph 105), but also Farah's suggestive posing (photographs 72–73), and finally Paul's depiction of a poster on the wall of the games room:

> "You see on window shown have let your fingers do the talking." (photograph 102, third choice).

However, as with the photographs of some of the hearing pupils there is not always direct visual reference to the particular intended meaning contained within the photograph being elaborated upon. Often (as in the last quote) the intended meaning contextualises Deaf experience, or being Deaf. In sum, generally speaking the sets of photographs recorded by the Deaf pupils do not unfold in a linear and sequential sequence as a story over time but rather appear to depict whatever is available and meaningful in the visual environment of the photographing subjects, and in this sense the photographs together reconstruct that spatial environment through the compiling of visual elements. There is less attention to that which can be communicated through linear sequencing and more attention to that which is available as visual information in one's immediate surroundings.

Single versus multiple viewpoints

The distinction between the Deaf and hearing approaches becomes most noteworthy in considering the set that Lalage (a hearing pupil) took of 'killing time' between lessons at her high school. Because of its setting and location in a sort of temporal vacuum, a period in which time seems dead and boredom is clearly and visibly around the corner (photograph 17), this set is most closely aligned with the lack of temporal organisation found in the Deaf sets. But although there is indeed no narrated beginning or end to this story, it is the almost continuous maintenance of viewpoint that organises the set. Lalage herself clearly found it difficult to select from this set of photographs the significant moments, instead resorting to unqualified preference:

> "I like this one me!" (photograph 18, third choice).

Or writing down confusing information without much clarification:

> "This is my friend Joanne and it is a typical pose." (photograph 15, first choice).

In fact, it is not clear from the photograph who Joanne is, and neither is it obvious that there is a pose. However, the set does contain much information both about passing time at school as well as about Lalage's approach to depicting it. First of all, she hardly leaves her seat, and although people are regularly seen coming and going, nowhere is there the sense of energy one gets from glancing through the sets of the Deaf pupils, in which both the photographer and his or her companions seem to be continuously on the move. Throughout Lalage's set there is occasional reference to the same companions and the seating arrangement at a particular table. Her set contains regular and frequent references to this vantage point, about every fifth photograph being taken from behind that table. The pattern seems to have been to be seated at this particular table with particular friends, from which occasionally little 'excursions' were being undertaken to events or people of interest in another part of the room worthy of photographic attention, such as a fellow student blowing bubbles with bubble-gum (photograph 18), after which the original seat at the same original table was returned to. Despite being located within a temporal vacuum, it is not hard to bring a narrative form to the set of photographs, although the precise location of each photograph within the set, due to the lack of temporal organisation, is of lesser relevance to that narrative. The organising elements here are mainly twofold: the presence of a relatively stable viewpoint providing a sense of continuity, and a pattern of reporting which organises the photographs into a linear temporal sequence, albeit a discontinuous one. The stability of the viewpoint is further enhanced by a lot of pans, that is, moving the camera as one would turning the head, without moving position altogether. Taking photographs in such a way generates the idea of a panorama, a view around the room from a single viewpoint.

By contrast, the Deaf pupils were unconcerned with capturing a linear-temporal sequence of events (the eight sets mentioned earlier). They show much less panoramic overlap, mainly because the Deaf photographers were moving around the rooms of the college without following any particular narrative patterning. Their interpretation is without exception a distinctly visual one, providing a wealth of information on the college as a space in which events occur, both simultaneously and sequentially. Rather than an Albertian window, as I noted above, their representation is more like a Brechtian one, in which the viewer is being absorbed into events by a lack of conventional sequencing of photographs. If the photographs of the hearing pupils can be said to be a performance on the stage that is the photographic frame, the Deaf pupils' representations have done away both with the boundaries of the stage and the formal, sequenced arrangements by which the audience is allowed access to what happens on that stage. Instead the viewer is no longer sure of anything, and is thrown in among the visual bustle, in which the gaze is a multi-directional one (photograph 109) and the viewer is in with the crowd. Linear narrative is lost and visual representations are ever just that: re-presentations. Of course, the context of photographic viewing allows us to remain in control; it is we who enter and can decide to leave. But once given over to the photographs, we have to deal with the visual bustle which the Deaf pupils, with some notable exceptions, choose to represent as forming their social environment. It is both in their choice of the event to be represented as well as in particular choices made in the way such an environment is represented that the idea of collective vision is located, rather than around any notion pertaining to the suitability that any particular social event would present to them in terms of it being in any way a 'photographable' or more legitimately 'social' topic than life in the college. This is a reminder of Bourdieu's earlier statement to the effect that, technically, everything is photographable. I would add that not only is everything photographable, but everything is photographable in an almost unlimited number of ways.

That Deaf pupils preferred to photograph their college is an indication of the place the college plays in their lives, and to that extent the college probably influences their perception of social environments in general. It is in this respect noteworthy that eight of the Deaf pupils chose to depict the ordinary of daily experience, often accompanied by statements which indicate pride in aspects of it ("people having a brill chat"). The hearing pupils more regularly rushed to depict the out of the ordinary (in the sense of less often indulged in) social form, that of leisure activity, which nevertheless provides a more conventional occasion for popular photography.

The idea of linear vs. spatial ordering of experience

The differences found in the kinds of ordering of the photographs followed by the Deaf and hearing pupils respectively, are of some importance to discussions that have taken place on the ability within languages to realise temporal reference. Notably, suggestions have been made in the past that d/Deaf people might have problems in conceptualising the idea of time as a linear sequencing of events.[1]

A good way to explore Deaf people's realisation of temporal references has been through paying careful attention to their use of signs indicating temporal aspect:

> "...features of sign language make them especially relevant to a consideration of temporal reference. Sign language is different from spoken language and thus provides a different context for examining ideas about temporal reference. The presentation of sign language is spatial and it exploits the properties of the signing space to convey meaning, whereas spoken language is sequential in presentation. The intricate relationship between time and space suggests that languages' differential use of time and space in communicating overt messages is likely to affect not only expression but also the experience of these dimensions of events." (Gregory and Llewellyn-Jones 1992:27)[2]

However, the sequencing of the photographs by the Deaf and hearing pupils in this study would support the idea that it is not only, or not in the first place, the presentation of sign language which is spatial rather than sequential. Taking into consideration the fact that photographic self-expression to a large extent occurs outside the confines of language (in possible contrast to the interpretation of photographs), the analysis of continuity witnessed in sequences of photographs taken by both Deaf and hearing pupils suggests graphically that the Deaf people who have taken part in this study prefer to express their experience of social environment in a spatial-simultaneous rather than a linear-sequential manner. Rather than spatiality being imposed upon Deaf people by their language, I suggest that spatiality is part of the collective vision of Deaf people. This is not to suggest that Deaf people would in any way be unable to ‘understand the concept of time’, and even less that the concept of linear time shared between hearing people is not shared by Deaf people also, for example in understanding life-cycles or an ability to adhere to ‘timing’ in all the social contexts to which both hearing and Deaf people are subject. Rather, within the context of an experience of the social and material world which is based on visual information, organisation and patterning of that world would logically be spatial and iconic/symbolic rather than linear and abstract/symbolic. Sign languages exploit and expand further upon that basic arrangement, and essentially, secure the ability to communicate and reach agreement upon such arrangement, but I argue that this study suggests that they do not provide its basis. This basis is provided, much more fundamentally than by language itself, by sensory experience, which can be expressed through collectively shared visual depiction and conventional collective vision as well as, naturally, through the iconicity and spatial constructions of language.

The idea of connectedness: association in visual expression

The focus by the Deaf pupils on life in the college itself also provides an implicit comment on the role of residential accommodation and the currently politically unpopular idea of the special education residential school. If the photograph sets of the hearing pupils can, on the whole, be said to constitute a multidimensional set of biographies on the occasions and drama of leisure, the sets of the Deaf pupils provide a singularly unified biography of the ordinary and unremarkable, with the occasional counterpoint symbolism of marked occasions such as a kiss, a pose or a handshake. As Chaney remarks, leisure is itself strongly associated with the occasion of taking pictures (or having them taken); in fact, its potential in terms of engaging in popular photography is one of its defining elements:

> “...the domain of leisure, as the sorts of occasions and activities marked as pleasurable and/or

> significant, is constituted to a greater or lesser extent through the possibility of their being photographed." (Chaney 1993:84)

If this is so, then the absence of leisure activity in the sets of the Deaf pupils is another defining characteristic of the sets (except perhaps some photographs of people sunbathing on the lawn outside college, photograph 68)—even more so after such events as the pursuit of leisure had been invited as suitable occasions for photographic representation in this study. In "ordering and celebrating the contours of social distinction" (Chaney 1993:84) the Deaf college itself is being presented as socially distinctive, and the celebratory nature of this distinction finds credence in some of the remarks provided with selected photographs:

> "This picture shows that the college is very good for Deaf people" (photograph 93, fourth choice).

But apart from this, the photographs appear to celebrate 'normality' as a worthy function in its own right. This is equally the case within the context of the Deaf college, because normality is being associated with the welcoming attitudes, present within the college, to the use of sign language, which is in marked contrast with attitudes found outside it. This celebration of being at liberty to communicate in one's own language pervades both the photographs and the commentaries:

> "See his personity and he is sign not pose and it looked natural!" (photograph 105, first choice)
> "See deaf young people get together and have a brill chat" (photograph 113, fourth choice)
> "Lot of students eat dinner, talk each other." (photograph 59, third choice)
> "Susan sign her name with her left arm." (photograph 60, fourth choice)
> "One student phone minicom talk to a friend." (photograph 98, first choice)
> "You see on window shown have let your fingers do the talking." (photograph 102, third choice)
> "Look good normal and some thing do." (photograph 124, first choice)
> "The student have a chat and have nice rest." (Chivonne, photograph 122, fourth choice).

The college thus serves as a venue which shields Deaf pupils from a wider society in which they are not treated as normal, and it shares this function with the Deaf club. This may be one reason why the sort of leisure activities depicted in the hearing pupils' photographs are entirely absent from Deaf pupils' photographs; in so far as they do take place, they will often be situated outside the 'haven' of the college (as reflected by the hearing pupils' depictions of "going (out) to...") and occur in the presence of hearing people. Photographic representation of such situations might reflect the problematic as well as the celebratory and may therefore be avoided.

One of the effects of college-life is that it offers Deaf pupils a life-style which includes strong sentiments of connectedness at its weakest or feelings of belonging in its stronger forms, and a striving among Deaf people to shape a social environment in which they can enact, sustain and develop the ramifications of normality. It is this connectedness that is borne out in the photographs, both in the focus that exists on the in-group of the college, but also in the pursuit of clear visual representation of the mundane and unremarkable.

Posing

What the Deaf pupils share with the people in the Deaf club is a general ease of interaction with a camera. Deaf pupils show more regularly a positive form of interaction with the camera, whereas hearing pupils either avoid creating a 'photographic ceremony' or ignore the presence of a camera altogether. This is entirely in accordance with the brief, which asks pupils to avoid posing, since my original interest was not in the occasion of photography, but in the visual attention that the pupils would pay to their environment while photographing. In the photographs taken by hearing pupils there are no instances of choreographed formal posing, although occasionally posing does occur in line with some of the types of posing I will describe below, most notably in one set in particular (photographs 10–14). Photographs 10 and 14 are furthermore auto-biographic in that they are depicting the person who, following the brief, was supposed to take the photographs. But generally the photographs of the hearing pupils do not provide the kind of persistent posing that happens in the photographs of the Deaf pupils. My mistake was to underestimate the power of what apparently is a very strong convention, at least in the case of the Deaf pupils. It is interesting in itself that most hearing pupils, either consciously or unconsciously, stuck to the brief, whereas most Deaf people clearly did not—they acted almost to the contrary. Although I regard my inclusion of the proviso against taking posed photographs as a mistake, the resulting photographs provide an interesting (if confusing) comment on the original brief.

The frequency of posing also formed another significant statistic. Table 2 of the appendix contains the variable 'portraiture' as a measure of this deliberate photographic act on the part of both photographer and the person(s) posing. Both Deaf and hearing pupils have taken a roughly similar number of photographs of people in general (as opposed to for example nature or objects) as shown in the first variable 'people as subject'. However, the variable 'portraiture' reveals significant preference for posing on the part of the Deaf pupils (x^2 51.92, p = .00). They also take more pictures of people they clearly know (without those people posing): the variable 'known persons' is also significant (x^2 4.45, p = .03) although less so than portraiture.

I will not treat this difference between posing and not posing in the Deaf and hearing sets as significant simply on the basis of the statistical element since I cannot be sure of whether the pupils, in addition to the personal brief I gave them, read the written brief later as a reminder before starting to photograph, although I did urge them to do so. Instead, I will focus on kinds of posing I observed in the sets of the Deaf pupils without entering into any kind of judgement of the presence of posing and the relative absence of it in the hearing sets, and attempt to arrive at a conclusion regarding the pertinence of the kind of posing in relation to the idea of collective vision among Deaf people.

The photographs of the Deaf pupils show a wide register of posing, from the spontaneous to the carefully orchestrated and solemn, and from the humorous to the candid and romantic. What follows therefore is a list, in order of increasing occurrence in the sets, of the types of posing accompanied by a short comment on their communicative and symbolic potential.

Formal group posing

The only instance of such a formal pose is photograph 74, taken by Cheryl, who comments:

> "Everyone together. Show look lots of charchter." (photograph 74, third choice)

This photograph appears in a set in which 14 out of 24 photographs are posed, indicating a clear preference on the part of Cheryl for such photographs. This is a pose providing an occasion which is also a shared and orchestrated 'historical moment', demanding from all those who pose a certain level of decorum and sense of ceremony. It is through photographs of this type that members of the Deaf community construct a stock of imagery which links them to other generations of Deaf people and to other groups of Deaf people around the country, and provide a sense of cultural continuity to being Deaf (see chapter 7). Yet at the same time it is suprising that only one person took a photograph after instigating this ceremony, although there were ten cameras about among the pupils.

Formal posing in front of the college

There are few examples *of this type of posing throughout the sets, but photographs 65* and 70 both share a formal, central arrangement against the backdrop of the college building. Photographs like these provide a sense of personal history, a 'having been there', which is also commented on by Bourdieu in his discussion of a couple posing in front of famous architecture (such as the Eiffel Tower) during a holiday:

> "...the photograph becomes a sort of ideogram or allegory, as individual and circumstantial traits take second place. The person photographed is placed in a setting which is primarily chosen for its high symbolic yield." (Bourdieu, 1990:36)

This holds equally true in the case of these poses. The college is one that is widely known within the Deaf community, and although its architecture is hardly memorable, the Deaf people who have lived there (and many among those who have not) will immediately recognise it. In these photographs the lawn outside the college takes on the formal symbolic character of a campus, providing the benefit of a fortuitous air of educational attainment to the people posing.

Formal posing: persona records

Examples of this type are photographs 55, and 97, the latter showing a surprising quality of lighting which I for one would not have expected possible with the cheap plastic camera that was used. This type also includes the formal and explicit posing 'borrowed' from pin-up photography (photograph 72). Although this photograph shows the same inclusion of architecture as the photographs of the previous type, here the idea of campus shifts to providing an uneasy backdrop where something more associated with privacy and romance would have been more conventional, as an immediate result of the kind of reference that this sort of posturing makes to photographic disciplines where these postures are more commonly deployed. All of these photographs share a certain indulgence on the part of the photographer in the recording of persona, but providing all the character of the portrait, as well as the photographs being the result of a particular dramaturgy acted out between photographer and those posing on the basis of agreement and mutual co-operation.

Informal posing

An untypical example of this relatively common kind of posing is photograph 62. It is untypical mainly in its use of space around the person photographed. Informal posing is characterised by the person being photographed not taking up a conventional posture (photograph 75):

> "Photographs ordinarily show people face on, in the centre of the picture, standing up, at a respectful distance, motionless and in a dignified attitude. In fact, to strike a pose is to offer oneself up to be captured in a posture which is not and which does not seek to be 'natural'." (Bourdieu 1990:80).

In these cases there is more of an impression of changing attention rather than pose for the benefit of the camera. Its presence is more of a temporary interruption than an entire event in itself. To the extent that the presence of the camera commands their attention, it secures the occasion of posing, but here without the kind of demands on the people who are posing described by Bourdieu.

Impromptu posing

This is hardly to be termed posing under Bourdieu's description, but I see it here as striking a quick response to the often sudden appearance of the camera. There is almost always visible, on the faces of the people being photographed, an awareness that a camera is being pointed at them (photograph 57), but otherwise the photographs have all the 'sneaked' characteristics of the snapshot (photographs 64, 67, 95, 103, 112). This type is relatively common.

Explicit response posing

This kind of posing involves the people being photographed providing a clear response to the photographer's presence (photograph 69). Mostly the responses are positive (photographs 58, 60, 71, 76, 93, 105, 110, 114) or humorous (photographs 91, 109, 115–116). Photographs of this last type occur more often than any other type discussed.

It is clear that, as the formality of the posing decreases, the frequency of other types of posing increases. What is witnessed in the last type of posing above is a form of visual wit, which was also indentified in the context of some examples described in chapter 5: such wit, among the types of posing here present, is apparently easily and quickly indulged in. What is illustrated by all of these photographs is both the commonality of posing and the ability and willingness of the Deaf pupils to interact with and exploit the presence of a camera. Rather than the photographer exercising control over both the event and the construction of the photograph, the Deaf photographers share the camera as a tool of depiction and visual expression of photographic content with those whom they are photographing. In the case of the Deaf pupils, engaging in popular photography is not only a public rather than a private pursuit, there is cultural significance in the dramaturgy of the ways of staging photographic performances. The recording of photographs provides occasions in which meaningful interaction with *the potential of popular photography* is being shared by those involved collectively, as well as providing occasions for the self-expression of the person with the camera individually. Within the context of the college, and with cameras being made available to a collective of Deaf pupils, this kind of popular photography becomes a comparatively democratic device for the cultural expression of self and the collective.

The Deaf college and the Deaf club

This chapter has gone some way towards describing the effects that a specific visuality has on popular photographic expression. I have outlined some elements which brought the Deaf photographers together, and although there certainly are elements which are particular to individual expression, the overall impression is one of a relatively stable collective form of expression and interpretation. The discussions presented in this chapter have progressed the study in two areas. The first area is that of providing distinct similarities between the Deaf college and the Deaf club as scopic social spaces. Not only do Deaf pupils sign to each other in the hallways as did Deaf people between the rooms on the staircase, they hang out there (photographs 89–90). Fire-doors are kept open, with people standing in the doorways in a leisurely fashion which indicates they were not simply 'caught' in the moment of a quick remark while entering or leaving (photograph 93). It was apparently even legitimate to photograph a person caught in an act which most often is out of bounds as a popular photographic topic (photograph 66), or at least outside the obvious, although there is probably also an element of humorous transgression involved. The use of space can also involve an element of playful transgression (photographs 61, 63), and it is a playfulness which is not witnessed in any of the photographs the hearing pupils took, both in terms of the activity portrayed as well as in terms of such an activity providing an occasion with pictorial meaning. These photographs manifest information which is out of the ordinary, on the people portrayed and on the uses that spaces can be put to, but the photographs themselves are also full of energy and tension by comparison to some of the 'action' photographs taken during football events by the hearing pupils (photographs 25, 37, 43), even when considering that the necessary use of flash is an aiding factor in the pictorial representation of movement.

Conclusion to this chapter

My photographic exploration through life in the Deaf club and the auto-photographic expression of the Deaf pupils in this chapter has resulted in a construction of the Deaf community's visuality through a singular focus on photographic expression. Additional approaches are necessary, such as studies into Deaf people's use of video, the visual elements involved in their choices of television viewing, and so on. Nevertheless, its contribution here is to be seen in the context of remarks that have been made on themes of visual perception and attention to the visual with which Deaf people are associated. The still camera, as an easily managed and readily available tool for social investigation and the resulting photographs, which can be easily stored, retrieved, reproduced and looked at for prolonged periods, as well as the social nature of the occasions of taking or being photographed, have together provided precious insights into the social nature of collective vision. That collective vision has here been argued to exist in the Deaf club as scopic social space as well as in the photographic expression of Deaf pupils in a Deaf college; and as such is evident in two major institutions associated with the Deaf community. There is some support for the claim that photographs are not only a common resource for Deaf people, but in addition that interaction with the still camera as a tool for the kind of iconic/symbolic representation with which Deaf people are anyway familiar through their language, comes 'naturally' to them and provides conventional and cherished opportunities to record elements of the status quo of the community in the symbolic dramaturgy of formal group posing. Nowhere does this become quite as explicit as in an analysis of the kind of photographs which are placed in magazines which are aimed at d/Deaf audiences. In addition, the sort of photographs which are reproduced and to some extent mass-circulated (that is, within the confines of the Deaf community as well as those individuals who have some interest in it, and various institutions which draw upon it as a resource such as charities, representative associations, educational establishments and research centres) confirm some of the findings of this study. Conversely, the kind of information which has been generated by this study can serve to assess and critique the editorial practices on the representation of pictorial material, and most notably the relationship between the written material which is presented and the photographs which are deemed, in some way, to illustrate or otherwise contribute to this material. That exercise is attempted in the next chapter.

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1. In an article in *Signpost*, Paul Arnold supported such suggestions by speculating on three potential reasons for this being so. Judged from within the context of this study, probably the most notable weakness in his account is in terms of the approach taken, namely that of an 'able' academic comparing Deaf and hearing people within a common paradigm of disability, dysfunction and deprivation:

   > "[First, it] may be that damage to the auditory system means that the person will have difficulties with time.
   >
   > The second possibility is that deafness delays the development of the language which is needed to talk about time. [...]
   >
   > The third possibility is that it may be a product of cultural deprivation." (Arnold, 1991:11)

2. Arnold's claims were apparently in part based on this study, but see Gregory (1992) for comments on Arnold's approach.

A scopic status quo: snapshots of being Deaf as mass expression

7

"Studies of magazines have usually treated literary texts, or editorial images, or ads, as independent entities and have proceeded to analyse their meanings divorced from their original context. This strategy flattens our conception of the way magazines came to be assembled and then received. For these elements are certainly not apprehended in isolation; rather, images and texts, ads and editorial matter, are each designed to work off each other within the larger ensemble of the magazine." (Stein 1989:146)

The British Deaf News, See Hear!, and *Talk*

This part of the study was designed to focus attention on the uses that photographs were being put to in three distinct magazines aimed at audiences with interests in being Deaf, but in recognition of the epigraph to this chapter the analytic focus is on forms of topic agreement in articles, between photographs and texts. There are distinguishing features which mark the photographic content of these three magazines, and even an exploratory content analysis of the placement of photographs in one single year's issues of the three magazines illustrates some of those features. The three magazines being discussed here are *the British DeafNews* (BDN), the magazine of the British Deaf Association (BDA), the magazine *Soundbarrier*, which I will refer to by its current name, *See Hear! Magazine*, of the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID), and the magazine *Talk* of the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS). *See Hear! Magazine* has the widest readership, since its focus is not only on the Deaf community itself—however that is being defined—but rather on the entire aggregate of people who have a hearing loss or a special interest in it, including deafened and hard of hearing people, and 'hearing' people with incidental hearing losses (for example due to circumstances of employment). The NDCS magazine *Talk* addresses mainly parents of d/Deaf children and those employed in the education of d/Deaf children, as well as featuring some regular pages of interest to d/Deaf children themselves. And finally:

> "The main print-based information vehicle of the BDA (and the Deaf community) is the monthly British Deaf News (BDN) which has a Deaf readership of 18,000. This magazine has, in various

> guises, been published without a break for at least a century and in recent years it has invested in a programme to ensure that the content and control of the magazine is in the hands of Deaf people. However, on its own, BDN is difficult for some Deaf people to read and does not enable access to wider 'non-deaf' information." (BDA 1991:283)

The BDA's claim to provide the Deaf community's main print magazine has found some support in my discussion of the presence of magazines in the Deaf club (chapter 5), when I noted that only *the British DeafNews* was occasionally present, although the low incidence of any of the three means that such support is not in itself significant. However, in view of the claims being made in the quote above, most attention in this chapter will be devoted to the photographs placed in *the British DeafNews*. A notable observation here is that *the British DeafNews*—much like the BDA itself—is not only read by Deaf people, it is run by Deaf people. The revelation above that *the British DeafNews* is not wholly accessible to all Deaf people is, I argue, not only, or merely, a comment on the use of written language in *the British DeafNews*. The suggestion that Deaf people exploit a shared visuality, and the kind of support for that claim brought forward in this study, can find a practical application in a discussion of photographic content in such periodicals as *the British DeafNews*, *See Hear! Magazine* and *Talk*, although of the latter two magazines it should be made clear that they address the Deaf community, or members of it, as a minority (albeit a potentially substantial one) of their total readership. The claim made on behalf of *the British DeafNews* is that it not only addresses, but also 'voices' and represents the Deaf community. In line with such claims, *the British DeafNews* has all the hall-marks of a community-based periodical, including such features as the column 'From around the country', keeping the members of the community in touch not only with the BDA but with each other, and a marked absence of information relating to matters which do not bear in some explicit way upon the community or members of it. To this extent, *the British DeafNews* is symbolic of the idea of a single community, realising the *idée-fixe* if not the actuality in its physical presence as well as its internal editorial organisation. This organisation moves, after paying attention to the business, politics and socius of the BDA itself, slowly 'inwards' from material pertaining to the world at large (but in the context of the community) in the earlier pages to showing particular, momentous if ordinary, moments in Deaf lives through the popular photographic 'snaps' sent in by the membership itself in the wake of such occasions as silver and golden weddings, retirement parties and sponsoring or sponsored events in the final pages. In this way, the reading through of its content from cover to cover, leaves the reader with the illusion of having penetrated into the heart of the community, touching upon—if only in the superficial gratification of quick visual inspection—particular moments of some significance in the lives of particular people before closing the back-cover. In becoming witness, through the viewing of these otherwise private snaps, to the happiness conjured up in the celebratory posing of often unknown 'strangers', the reader inflects *the British DeafNews* into the family album of the British Deaf community, an album which expands with every new issue and provides, through the amalgamation of iconic references to moments which are emblematic of community life or moments of individual triumph, an organised and orchestrated histogram of the collective which can be browsed and searched and thus provides the sense of 'overview' which lends credence and brings visible unity to the idea of community.

In the periodical's frequency, and the resulting potential for amassing and storing each latest copy, the community is ensured of a conventional history (dating back to at least its first issue) as well as being given hopes of a conventional (or imaginable) future. In the sense that *the British DeafNews* has been going from strength to strength, witnessed in part in the procurement in 1992 of mutually beneficial editorial and financial ties with the commercial television company Channel Four, *the British DeafNews* also builds on the imagination of a Deaf community which is becoming 'visually' richer not only in history but in collective experience and outlook. This is reflected in having an increasing number of pages available for its various reflections and representations, as well as now existing, due to an increasingly 'available' technology, in four-colour print, which not only invests it with a prestige which was, in the case of *See Hear! Magazine*, deferred until a year later, but also in terms of accomplished iconic realism: colour provides the intonation of iconic meaning, as well as having the benefit of making photographs more differentiated in terms of their constitutive visual elements. In providing colour photography in its pages, the BDA to some extent lifts *the British DeafNews* beyond the amateurish and low-budget efforts associated with cheap print runs, as well as lifting it outside undesired reference to such photographic practice as social documentaries and charity PR materials, which itself constitutes a symbolic 'moment' in a history of graphic representation of the Deaf community as a collective. In fact, providing colour photography was apparently more important than heightening the print quality of the texts, which in 1992 were still of relatively low laser-printer quality. It is of symbolic significance, in terms of showing a modal preference based on the visual nature of Deaf people's approach to information, that a magazine which is run for and by Deaf people shows visually explicit preference of image quality over that of text.

The colour used in *See Hear! Magazine*, not introduced until 1993 when the association with the BBC started making its mark on the production of the magazine, is to be seen in terms of a different progression, that of commercial viability, and value for money. These considerations were present, but less marked, in the 1992 issues, which do have full-colour covers with 'splash' photographs (images covering most, if not all, of the cover). The RNID is a registered charity operating on a commercial basis. Its association, starting in October 1992, with the BBC which is responsible for the television series *See Hear!* aimed at a nation-wide d/Deaf audience, impacted directly on both the very title and the content of the magazine produced by the RNID. This association clearly provides the opportunity of access to the BBC's rich stock of visual material and professional expertise in relation to producing more colourful magazines which exploit a highly particular and carefully maintained ratio of pictures to text. This ratio, favouring more and larger photographs set in the context of condensed and snappier articles steadily reforms the pages of the re-titled *See Hear! magazine* post-1992 and is itself part of the postmodern project, at least in so far as the photographs are elements of the aspirations of such professionals as art directors to move towards an 'international style' of publishing, in which language becomes increasingly suspect and substituted by particularly shallow forms of iconic symbolism. This symbolism may mean different things to different people, but also therefore makes the magazine digestible to the largest possible audience. But even in 1992, while sporting only black and white photographs and duo-tone photographs, the editors make particular qualitative and æsthetic judgements on the properties of popular photography, its mundane topics, and the inclusion of snapshots, and *therefore amateur photographs do not* make frequent appearance. This conspicuous absence is itself an implicit discouragement to readers who might otherwise send in their own photographs. Within the sort of commercial ideology that necessarily informs editorial practice of *See Hear! Magazine*, the photographs placed *are as characteristic of distinctly contemporary* stylistic tendencies, including a shallow scope for narrative function, as they are of the wide audience by which they are to be consumed. The BDA makes explicit that:

> "...meaningful access to information is influenced by how it is delivered and presented. For Deaf people, who are members of a linguistic and cultural minority group, presentation is a very important consideration because their access is through BSL." (BDA 1991:283)

The printed material published by the RNID offers opportunities for publicising the RNID's commercial products as well as fulfilling the requirements any other charity might have:

> "Publicity needs no explanation except in addition to press advertising it embraces all the printed matter put out in booklet form, including annual reports, our magazine *Hearing*, films and t.v. appeals and relations generally with the BBC, Press and Public." (RNID 1991:286).

With hindsight there is both symbolic humur and a distinct irony in the fact that although in the report reference to the RNID's target clientele is consistently made using a lowercase 'd' (deaf people), the wider "Public" as well as the powerful "Press", to which the RNID has to play out its public accountability through the regular presentations of annual reports, are apparently deserving of initial capitals.

Although the annual report featuring this quote dates back to 1971, a later self-assessment judges that:

> "The picture that emerges is fairly representative." (RNID 1991:288).

A discussion of *Talk* magazine is less informative within the context of this study, since its photographic representations focus almost exclusively on the portrayal of d/Deaf children in educational settings. There is a certain focus in the magazine *Talk* on educational issues, reflecting a concern with current issues in the education of d/Deaf children, which is why the NDCS is:

> "...supporting research into the integration of deaf children in mainstream schools" (Cayton 1991:291).

In Cayton's article there is no reference to the clearly experienced and explicitly stated benefits expressed elsewhere in the same volume, significantly by people who are themselves Deaf, of special d/Deaf schools for d/Deaf children. Cayton's article is therefore illustrative of a certain ambivalence on the part of NDCS regarding these issues.

In the article quoted, Cayton does not refer to *Talk* magazine other than stating that the association produces a wide range of publications, videos and children's books (ibid:291). The magazine appeared quarterly in 1992, providing only a small set of photographs in the four issues. The content matter of the photographs hardly ventures outside the topic of education, or rather, photographs hardly stray to include topics depicting other aspects of being Deaf than those addressing the education of d/Deaf children. Within the context of a study of the visuality of the Deaf community and the importance of school experiences and their socialising potential for Deaf people, there would clearly be great scope for a differently focused attention to photographic representation in *Talk* magazine. For example, the photographs of the Deaf pupils discussed in the previous chapter provide, in their iconic richness as well as through their conventional symbolic detail, relevant commentaries on the social nature of schooling environments as well as a source of information for parents and their d/Deaf children on life in a Deaf college. In any case, because of the limited scope of *Talk* magazine in terms of the topics it addresses, as well as its quarterly status which generated few photographs over the year 1992, I have left the magazine out of the analysis.

My argument throughout has been that photographs gain informative status when placed within the context of the particular visuality of Deaf people that is being worked out here, and a sociological study of photographs placed in magazines aimed at a Deaf audience should, I suggest, involve treating the photographs as reflections of distinct individual and collective knowledge based on the visual and iconic/symbolic, and therefore address how that knowledge becomes inscribed as a form of representation in the contexts of the magazines being studied. Popular photography as engaged in by Deaf people is a distinct social practice, which is both ceremonious and meaningful beyond the mere record that the photograph itself occasions. Such interaction, going beyond the photograph as a perfect analogon of an external reality to the expression of collectively shared meanings and social symbolic, may be at odds with the demands on the photograph within the context of the rapidly postmodernising magazine, which treats photographs very much as fashionable icons of a certain style, as colourful elements bringing relief from the boredom of the text; considerations here have moved from ethical to æsthetic concerns.

The dataset

The dataset is here, as before, a collection of photographs. They are more particularly the photographs that have appeared as part of editorial practice, that is, excluding the photography used in the distinctly repetitive advertising element, of the magazines *the British DeafNews* and *See Hear! Magazine* in all of their 1992 issues. The topics of the photographs have been judged separately from the topics of the texts in which they were found, because the intention has been to critique the interplay between the content of the images and that of the articles being represented. An article, then, is here perceived to be any substantial editorial 'item' featuring in the magazines, and articles can be composed of photographs alone, of photographs in combination with text, or of course of text alone. To this end, the topics of the photographs have been judged on purely iconic considerations, namely on the basis of the most prominent objects or collection of objects that have been depicted in the photographs.

Table 7.1 (page 302) provides an overview of the analysis carried out on the photographs contained in the magazines. The heading 'Photographs' provides a count of how many photographs appeared in total (713), and their distribution across the topics listed. These topics could never be mutually exclusive nor exhaustive (photographic content never is), but are rather to be seen as typical and as giving certain information preference. For example, although a photograph might have been taken in a Deaf organisation, it might show the Princess of Wales shaking hands, in which case the topic was listed as 'public life'. The heading 'Text' provides a count of the number of photographs (out of 713) which appeared in texts with the listed topics. Texts which carried no photographs do not appear in this analysis (they were excluded as articles falling outside the interest of this study). If more than one photograph has been placed in a text, then the topic of that text was listed a number of times corresponding to the number of photographs placed. Equally, photographs which were placed in their own right (without being placed in the context of written text) have been entered here as articles by themselves, meaning that in these cases the topic of the photographs is naturally in full agreement with the topic of the 'text' which it constitutes. As a consequence, there are as many text topics as there are photographs (713). The heading 'Agreement' is a measure of how often the topics of photographs were in agreement with the topic of the texts in which these photographs appeared. This measure is therefore a comment on the narrative quality of the article which contains both photographs and text, a quality which measures the extent to which the two modes of presentation, photographs and text, work together to produce a cohesive and intelligible article.

The topics of photographs are being judged on the basis of the depiction of concrete objects, therefore a number of topic measures are not available (or appropriate) in the listing of both photographs and texts, indicated by 'n/a'. For example, a text can be about 'language', but a photograph can only depict a physical expression of language, such as 'signs' and would therefore be listed under that topic. Similarly, a photograph can simply be an object such as a gravestone ('object record'), but the corresponding text may be about the restoration of a church used by Deaf people ('Deaf issue') or about a historically significant person ('personal life'). This indication of narrative quality of the article, therefore, is subject to consequent interpretation and a number of provisos listed later.

This table would suggest that there is 25% agreement between the topic of a text and the topic of a photograph placed in an article which contains both. However, photographs are iconic reflections, analogons of worldly objects, often incapable of capturing topics with no clear visual referent, for example the article topics 'language', and 'Deaf issue'. It should therefore be kept in mind that lack of agreement does not imply disagreement. For example, an article which was carried in both *the British Deaf News* and *See Hear! Magazine* was about the experiences of a Deaf man who had lost both his hands in a horrific accident at work. The topic of the article was captured under 'personal', although a case could be put forward for including it under 'Deaf issue', but the six placed photographs showed the man himself ('persona record'), the man at work ('work'), the man engaging in sports ('sport'), et cetera, all of which were photographic reflections of personal experiences. In relation to provisos such as these, consider the following:

1. The text topic 'personal' shows an agreement of 15 photographs with the topic 'family', and an agreement of 24 photographs with the topic 'persona record'.
2. All 7 photographs in article topic 'family' are photographs with the topic 'family'.

Topics	Photographs	Text	Agreement
Public life (events, persons)	158	87	41
Personal life (biographies, obituaries)	n/a	78	–
Family life	34	7	7
Family in public life	10	3	3
Persona record	175	n/a	–
Work	36	3	5
Education	51	61	34
Sport	53	47	39
Leisure	10	9	3
Health	7	14	7
Arts (including cinema)	25	25	17
Television	n/a	27	–
Deaf org. (society, sports club, church)	57	145	23
Charity	13	8	6
Sponsoring	n/a	13	–
Language	n/a	3	–
Interpreting	20	5	1
Deaf issues	n/a	114	–
Deaf aids (inc. typetalk, captioned videos)	n/a	62	–
Object record	57	n/a	–
Sign record	7	n/a	–
total	713	713	179

Table 7.1
Overall topic agreement between photographs and text

3. 'Sponsoring' proved unreliable as a topic mainly in view of the *British Telecom* Supplement in the *British Deaf News*. Most of the articles placed by *British Telecom*, although not about sponsoring directly, carried strong sponsoring overtones. For example, an article with a heading which suggested it was about theatre interpreting, was actually about *British Telecom* sponsoring the interpreting provision. Since the article topics were entered on the basis of the information provided in headlines, the resulting number of photographs in articles with this topic is distinctly lower than it might have been if a different selection method would have been pursued. Also note

that there are few (if any) visual referents for the topic 'sponsoring'. Most photographs involved depict actions undertaken in the sponsoring agreement, or handing over money or cheques which were the result of such activities.

4. All 3 photographs in the article topic 'language' were photographs with the topic 'sign record'.

5. Of the 57 photographs with the topic 'object record', 36 (63%) were in texts with the topic 'deaf aids'.

In view of all of the above, it is clear that I do not suggest that this table points to one single set of self-evident conclusions, but rather that this table forms an amorphous collection of data-elements which can be interpreted in different ways; the suggestion is that this table is a quantitative comment in its own right and to be treated with the scepticism indicative of informed social science.

In order to arrive at a more intelligible dataset for the purpose of comparing the approaches of the editors of *the British Deaf News* and *See Hear! Magazine*, I have adjusted the table to include only those photographs which appeared in articles which also included text, therefore excluding such matter as cover photographs and photographs placed in the table of contents, as well as photographs which appeared as articles, that is, without the accompaniment of text. In addition, the data in table 7.2 are separated between the two magazines, and some photographic topics ('persona record', 'object record' and 'sign record') have been matched with text topics which seemed to provide the most likely candidates for agreement ('public', 'family', 'Deaf organisations' and 'language'—table overleaf).

The British Deaf News here attains an agreement of 153 out of a total number of 308 photographs (50%); exactly half of the photographs have the same topic as the articles in which they appear. *See Hear! Magazine* attains an agreement of 92 out of a total number of 239 photographs (38%). However, *See Hear! Magazine* included a regular column entitled 'Product profile', which contained assessments of various kinds of equipment particular to the requirements of Deaf people, and this column typically included a photograph of that object. *The British Deaf News* did not have such a regular column, and pays much less attention to such new equipment. Excluding the combination of 'Deaf aids + object record' from the table raises agreement of *the British Deaf News* insignificantly to 51%, whereas *See Hear! Magazine* drops to 31%, just short of a third of the total number of photographs.

Portraits of the personal and the collective

In both magazines the photographic topic 'persona record' scores well above the rest. This is hardly surprising since many (if not most) articles are accompanied by a small identifying pho-

Topics	the British *DeafNews*		*See Hear! Magazine*	
	Photographs	Agreement	Photographs	Agreement
Public	79	24	50	9
Public + persona record	84	13	58	16
Personal + persona record	(84)	7	(58)	11
Family	11	4	29	3
Work	11	1	17	–
Education	26	19	13	8
Sport	35	25	2	1
Leisure	1	1	4	–
Arts	10	5	8	7
Deaf organisations	28	25	3	–
Deaf organisations + persona record	(84)	21	(58)	5
Charity	4	2	3	3
Interpreting	4	1	12	–
Deaf aids + object record	12	1	36	29
Language + sign record	3	3	4	–
Total	308	153	239	92

Table 7.2
Agreement of photographs with text in the British *DeafNews* and *See Hear! Magazine*

Size	the British *DeafNews*		*See Hear! Magazine*	
	persona records in text	total n° photos	persona records in text	total n° photos
<5cm	34	64	2	11
<10cm	75	217	31	137
≤15cm	84	21	39	76
>15cm	–	412	19	204
>20cm	–	3	12	40
Total	84	433	58	280

Table 7.3
Relationship between persona records and size

tograph of the author or the person written about. However, there is a marked difference in the treatment of persona records in *the British DeafNews* and *See Hear! Magazine* which goes beyond mere stylistic considerations. Table 7.3 (previous page) shows the relationship between the persona records placed in the two magazines and the size of the depictions.

As the table shows, all the photographs of persons in *the British DeafNews* are of 15cm or smaller, with 34 of them about the size of a postage-stamp. *See Hear! Magazine* shows a tendency to make its photographs of people much larger, and twelve of the photographs placed alongside text (20% of the total number of 58) are in fact larger than 20 cm, which is roughly half a page; the distribution of persona records size in *See Hear! Magazine* is much more equal, with similar distribution over and under 15cm in size. This tendency is less marked in the sizes of all the photographs in the dataset, although *See Hear! Magazine* does place a comparatively much greater number of photographs of over 20cm in size. A separate count reveals that *See Hear! Magazine* does not give preference over placing public figures larger than less public figures: of all the persona records over 10 cm in size, 9 are in the category 'public', 9 in the category 'Deaf organisations' and 11 in the category 'personal'. Indeed, in the largest size, over 20cm, 10 are of this last category, whereas the first two categories score 3 each. Equally, if not more, remarkable is the attention to faces on the covers. Out of the twelve *See Hear! Magazine* covers in the dataset, 5 have faces splashed over the front-cover, in this case almost without fail portraits of famous people in the d/Deaf community, such as Lord Ashley, and the first Deaf Head of a d/Deaf school, Mabel Davis. The only exception perhaps is the portrait of a person who writes a column as *See Hear! Magazine*'s newly appointed agony aunt.

By contrast, the covers of *the British DeafNews* show less concern with the particular and personal than with the communal and shared. It must be said, however, that the covers of *the British DeafNews* are an uneasy mixture of newspaper layout in magazine format, in that the covers provide, beside the title, both the table of contents and 'leader' articles, so that photographs placed on the cover play a much smaller role than they do in *See Hear! Magazine*. This idiosyncrasy gives *the British DeafNews* a distinctly 'textual' appearance. This arrangement was changed after 1992 to more conventional use of splash images on the covers. The nine photographs which are main cover pictures have topics such as a political demonstration (disability rights bill), the presenting of awards, the showing of official documents, general congress hall activity, and showing diplomas in a group posing for the camera. The distinct overall impression is that, although there are roughly equal numbers of persona records in both magazines, the stress is very different. *See Hear! Magazine* shows more focus, on covers and in size, on the personal and particular, whereas *the British DeafNews* pays more attention to the social and communal. This is equally so if the 'portraits' are widened to include not just a single person but the family. Table 7.2 shows that more than double the amount of 'family' photographs appear in *See Hear! Magazine* than in *the British DeafNews*. The personal and private experiences of being Deaf and their representation receive markedly more attention in *See Hear! Magazine* than in *the British DeafNews*, and become final in the amount of photographic attention paid to topics which centre more on the sharing of activities. Most notably, there are only 3 photographs on Deaf organisations in *See Hear! Magazine* (which includes Deaf clubs) and none of these photographs are in agreement with the topic of the text—they are incidental and comparatively meaningless illustrations. In sharp contrast, *the British DeafNews* placed 28 photographs showing aspects of Deaf organisations and clubs, and the agreement with the topic of the text with which they formed articles is very high: 25 photographs, an agreement of 89%.

Similar remarks can be made for such social topics as Education, showing 73% agreement for *the British DeafNews* and 61% for *See Hear! Magazine*, and Sport, showing 71% agreement for *the British DeafNews*, whereas *See Hear! Magazine* placed a mere 2 photographs of that topic, of which 1 is in agreement with the accompanying text. I should stress that this table, measuring only photographs which appeared as part of text, excludes 61 photographs in *the British DeafNews* from the 'Pictures' column, which typically depict the social activity of ordinary members in pictures sent in from all over the country.

Portraying the private and the shared

The pre-occupation with the personal in *See Hear! Magazine* is sublimised not so much (or not only) by erecting a regular agony aunt column in the pages of the magazine, but by portraying the agony aunt herself as a splash cover on that month's issue. The perceived audience of *See Hear! Magazine* is an aggregate of d/Deaf individuals brought together by the address-list of the magazine and is serviced by it under the terms of the RNID as a commercial organisation, with its 'Product Profiles' of new gadgetry to ease the life of the individual. In addition it brings status to the RNID as being technologically both advanced and engaged. The RNID is also portrayed as a representative organisation by bringing, through the distribution of *See Hear! Magazine*, the benefits of the sharing of burden (as well as products and services to lighten it) to the homes of subscribers. Subscribers can also count on the RNID to attend to psychological requirements in the particular context of being d/Deaf and see those requirements reflected in the 'agonies' of one's self and those of other subscribers—albeit entirely in writing. As a collective then, the d/Deaf subscribers to *See Hear! Magazine* are provided with a monthly dose of graphic representations with a distinct focus on the particular and personal, laid-out in the 'Quick-fix by Quark-Express' style of large, playfully positioned photographic representations, using partial overlap, displaying them across the page in various patterns, or cutting relevant visual elements out of their frames. In the photographic representations there is little that reflects social circumstance, or other evidence of the magazine addressing readers in any other context than as being unable to hear and requiring services.

Language and interpreting

The status of sign language and one particular form of its application, interpreting, is treated in a cursory fashion in both *See Hear! Magazine* and *the British Deaf News*. Although *See Hear! Magazine* placed 12 photographs of interpreting in various texts, not a single article in which they appeared was actually on interpreting. Most were placed as 'spectacular imagery' in the context of articles which were on topics bearing some relation to interpreting, for instance Deaf people's access to various official events such as political rallies (an example of a kind of topic agreement outside that which was being measured in both magazines), but others featured in articles with no actual (or no obvious) relationship to interpreting, such as reports on festivals or official visits. Although *See Hear! Magazine* placed four photographic records of signs, all four featured in one single text on a person's new commercial service provision to Deaf-blind users.

Similarly, *the British Deaf News* placed few photographs of interpreting situations, and only one of those featured in a text on interpreting, and even that only to the extent that it is about the publishing of an autobiography of an interpreter. The other three featured in texts about a visit to the Tower of London by a Deaf-blind group (2) and in the context of a text on an official visit. It is noteworthy that in both magazines a lot of the signing depicted graphically pertains to the requirements of a group of users who cannot themselves see: a quarter, 6 out of 23, show Deaf-blind interpreting. None of this is to say that signing did not appear more generally. In photographs with other topics, signs were a regular feature (although rather less widespread than was reflected in the photographs of the Deaf club and those taken by the Deaf pupils), but it remains nevertheless significant that the depiction of signs as a topic in its own right is not more frequent. That their depiction, although requiring careful visual consideration, is not impossible despite photographs reflecting a mere moment in their production, is rather aptly shown by *the British Deaf News*, when it placed three pictures of signs for 'Labour Party', 'Conservative Party' and 'Liberal Democrat Party', and asked readers to write in with comments as to their articulation.

The article appeared in advance of the 1992 general election, and was no doubt of some interest not only to Deaf people but also to interpreters working at political gatherings. It is at the same time a good example of how *the British DeafNews* addresses a definite collective, a community of sign language users, in ways beyond those that written text would be able to accomplish, and acting directly and practically upon the interests and communication needs of their subscribers. Beside these practical interests, the discussion of signs here provides an occasion for the imaginary collective 'owning' of sign language, through being provided with an opportunity to manipulate it by formalising its vocabulary, an opportunity which is offered as an exercise to be shared by all those who use the signs depicted here in the pages of *the British DeafNews*.

symbolic narrative versus iconic description

What I want to develop here is the idea that what emerges, in this analysis of photographs placed in two very different magazines aimed at d/Deaf audiences, can be couched in a social framework which takes as its mode of discourse Alpers' work on the Dutch art of describing discussed in chapter 3. Alpers was mainly concerned with forms of artistic expression as evidence of particular ways of seeing, ways which reflected the dominant form of perception in the culture in which the works of art she discusses were produced, namely that of the seventeenth century Dutch Republic. My concern here is less with different culture than with different visuality (which may otherwise well source cultural difference), but my methodology follows the direction taken by Alpers, in that she juxtaposes Northern Renaissance with Italian Renaissance, not to create a division between them but to be able to illluminate particular characteristics of one. Similarly, I will discuss the different nature of the photographs placed in *See Hear! Magazine* and *the British DeafNews*, not to suggest that they are representatives of different approaches or ideologies, but to illustrate that often photographs in one of the magazines (*the British DeafNews*) are indicative of just such a particular way of seeing, namely that of Deaf people.

See Hear! Magazine: focus on narratives

As explained earlier, the topics of the photographs were judged on the basis of iconic content, and judged separately from the topics of the texts with which they appeared. This means that photographs that could be judged to comment in some way on the article were often listed under a different topic than that of the article itself. An example of this can be found in an article placed in *See Hear! Magazine* (October issue :17), which included a photograph depicting a person delivering a bunch of flowers to a house. She is seen from the back, facing the open door and carrying a large bunch of flowers; in the doorway stands another person, seemingly about to receive the flowers, although there is a blank expression on her face which runs counter to the association we have of feelings of joy or surprise at the moment of being presented with a bunch of flowers. The text is an item in the *Product File* series of articles, and discusses the quality of a particular flashing door alarm. Although, with the aid of the photograph, a narrative can be built involving someone ringing this alarm in the event of delivering a bunch of flowers, the depiction does not show the flashing door alarm: the photograph is totally ambiguous without the text, and indeed the topic of flashing door alarm does not feature at all in the photograph's construction. What is illustrated here is not that photographs provide ambiguous information which is in need of information in other modes in order for it to be contextualised and delineated, but that photographs gain a particular meaning when placed with a text; in this case the relation between text and photograph, due to the absence of any depiction of the flashing door alarm in the photograph, is exceptionally weak and requires that the reader supplies a lot of imaginative narrative to bring the two together. If the same situation had been depicted from the inside of the house, including the flashing door alarm in the foreground and the scene of the door opening in the background, there would have developed a photographic narrative (albeit still a gratuitous one) much more congruent with the intention of the article.

A clear example where different topics might be argued to work more closely together is in an article in an issue published after 1992 which is about court room interpreting. The article included one photograph beside the text, and that photograph showed the domed roof of a court house which was adorned with a life-size statue of the figure of Justice carrying weighing-scale in one hand and a sword in the other. Although such distinctly stereotypical imagery can be said to comment on the institutionalisation of law in this country as well as on the historical basis of its symbolic representations and thus in this way contribute to the content of the article, it could equally convincingly be argued that the choice of combining text and depiction in this way is associated mostly with an editorial approach to iconic depiction based on an æsthetic concern with style rather than an ethical concern with meaning. The photograph, bearing in its visual elements no direct relation to the text in which it is placed, but instead providing mere reference to the symbolic of common signs or icons, becomes a decorative layout element subservient to the text. In both these examples of articles in *See Hear! Magazine*—on the flashing door alarm product and the interpreting in court issue (there are many more, for example the photographs placed in the context of the RNID's 'Louder than Words' campaign started in the October 1992 issue)—the photographs are at worst mere decoration, and at best present a banal narrative contribution, banal in the sense that the photographs could mean anything outside the confines of the text in which they appear, and also banal in the sense that the photographs are gratuitous: the narratives that can be constructed by the photographs are mere visual entertainment since the substance of the article is provided only by the text. To the extent that the photographs are meant to narrate, they are examples of a vernacular based on the notion of *istoria*, a visual telling, although under the terms of this vernacular they are unable to sustain narrative function without the support that written text provides.

Practice defined in such a manner is more directly at odds with the claims being made in this study about the visuality of Deaf people and their meaningful, shared exploitation of iconic referencing such as that witnessed in the ubiquitous use of popular photographic representations within the Deaf club and the ease of self expression through photographs, coupled with collectively shared interpretations of photographs, witnessed by the Deaf pupils. I am arguing here that Deaf people engage in a dialectically meaningful way with the various practices of photography on the basis of exploitation of iconic elements found both in photographs and Deaf people's language and visual interpretation of knowledge. From this perspective an editorial approach which treats photographs as decorative narrative forms which act out some moment or other merely in the context of written narrative is a manipulation of photographs into roles suggestive of a symbolically shallow rhetoric, and such an approach is tellingly 'out of sync' with the distinctly visual approach to information processing of Deaf people.

Representing a collective perception: *the British DeafNews*

The use of photographs in *the British DeafNews* reflects an uneasy marriage between editorial conventions in terms of both layout and content. Although the BDA readily admits that the magazine is not readily accessible to all of its readership and that representation of information to Deaf people needs careful consideration, especially in print media, the preference of BDA's policy is clearly in favour of stressing the potential of video and television. Nevertheless, it claims to produce, with *the British DeafNews*, the main print-based information vehicle for the Deaf community. But rather than drawing clear conclusions from its own admission that, despite *the British DeafNews* enjoying this status, it is an essentially written document—that is, it is English based, and therefore not readily accessed by Deaf people who have no great confidence in or experience with that language—the BDA follows an editorial policy which favours a rather conservative relationship between photographs and text in terms of both ratio and layout. Although there are significantly more photographs in *the British DeafNews* than in *See Hear! Magazine* (433 against 280), a swift size count shows that 217, half of the total number of photographs, are placed at a size equivalent to half a postcard or less. With the advent of desk-top publishing, making expensive, skilled and labour-intensive reprographic work redundant in the pre-press preparation of photographs, there is no longer an obvious reason to refrain from using photographs in a more liberal and more engaging manner. Despite some isolated efforts by BDA staff to create a certain contemporary 'look' to *the British Deaf News*, it has none of the contemporary stylistic tendencies favouring larger pictorial representation witnessed in the pages of *See Hear! Magazine*. However, *the British Deaf News* contains an occasional picture-story, albeit always securely contextualised by written narrative.

Picture-stories

There are in the dataset 4 such instances, accounting for 18 photographs in total. Two of the stories show Princess Diana (Patron of the BDA) during official visits, stories of 2 and 5 photographs respectively. The relationships and continuity of the photographs are here entirely provided by the display of royalty, and this also provides the occasion of the picture story. There is repetitive portrayal of royalty which is not always pertinent to the topic of the article in which it is placed. There are, to be precise, 21 photographs in all of royalty, that is nearly two photographs in every issue, serving more to provide a mutually enhancing public image to both the BDA as a national representative organisation enjoying the prestige of royal patronage, as well as to Princess Diana in her role as caring goodwill ambassador addressing her energy to those in need or those with limited power to command national attention. Although there certainly is pride in the Deaf community in the frequent display of interest in and interactions with Deaf people by Princess Diana, who has even ventured to address members of the community in sign language, there is little reason to suspect that the story would have been as important to members of the Deaf community without the presence of Princess Diana (i.e. if she were not providing a telling spectacle of royal approval). It is in the pictorial representation of the event rather than through the text itself that royalty is being portrayed, both through the 'expensive' (in conventional editorial terms) use of multiple photographs to illustrate something that is otherwise not very complex, as well as through the sense of momentous occasion, depicted in spectacular drama and the type of public conduct that royal presence provides as a display.

Through this kind of imagery, the Deaf community, with its historical association with working class roots, sees its sense of community and cultural difference acknowledged in the attentions of a select group; the active patronage of Princess Diana is both a spectacular sign of the increasing status of the Deaf community in Britain and a reference to a continuing and secure status quo.

One story gives more narrative credit to the depictions contained in the photographs. This story contains 7 photographs which greatly assist in explaining the various stages involved in producing subtitling for films especially for d/Deaf people. This picture-story is much more an iconic narrative in the way that the hearing pupils produced narratives, as a linear sequence of photographs. Although this picture-story hints at a different kind of information provision, it remains conventional to the extent that picture-stories of this kind regularly feature in mass magazines. There is no reference here to any particular features and strengths of the visual perception of Deaf people, and even less a sophisticated exploitation of pictorial conventions.

Awards, prizes and posing

There is another typical photographic topic in *the British DeafNews*, present as frequent references to various forms of accomplishment, attainment, winning or financial gain. Most often these are being portrayed through forms of posing which are either associative—that is, the people who played a role in the event group together to confront the camera in a moment which is framed by the significance of that event—or form particularly symbolic narratives, such as handshakes, the carefully orchestrated moment of handing over an oversized media-cheque, award or simply a bunch of flowers. Only rarely are such events portrayed spontaneously as they occur. *The British DeafNews* featured a total of 42 such occasions compared to 7 in *See Hear! Magazine*. This works out as 3½ times in each issue, of which 35 depicted the ceremonious decorum of posing. The significance of this kind of depiction is being stressed in the items 'Pictures' and 'Around the Country', the regular editorial items which appear at the end of the magazine, just before the material presented on sport.

The item 'Pictures' presents the popular snaps sent in by the membership in a simple two column layout, and these columns form the heart of mass circulation popular Deaf community visual representation. Out of the 61 photographs placed in 1992's issues, 12 of the popular snapshots feature such official occasions as congratulations, presentations, or handing over of awards and certificates. Mostly these events are less public as events than are ones depicted elsewhere in the magazine, so that media-cheques do not feature here. Out of the 12 photographs, 10 are staged. Such public displays of moments of significant and publicly acknowledged achievement may be the single-most typical feature of *the British DeafNews*. In a community which has long been denied opportunities in traditionally valued social domains (both in and outside the community itself) such as education and employment, accomplishments and official recognition by regional or national awarding bodies are hailed within the Deaf community with a special kind of public and spectatorial celebration, which turns personal attainment into a significant advance of the collective. Such advances are celebrated as though they were attributed to the community itself, and these accomplishments are inscribed symbolically into the history of the community with all the dramaturgy that the photographic moment can muster and placed into the pages of *the British Deaf News* as into a collective family album. Such celebration is indiscriminate and treats golden weddings, retirements from long-time chairmanships and the gaining of an HGV license with equal pomp. The ease with which both people in the local Deaf club and the Deaf pupils engaged with such popular representation suggests that these ceremonious displays are both a common resource and a conventional and widespread form of expression. Although the history of *the British Deaf News* may go back over a hundred years, the exploitation of this shared iconography of the popular must be relatively new; not until the advent of desk-top publishing did it make economic and editorial sense to print popular snaps in such quantities: in publishing systems which antedate the personal work station, the effort involved in preparing photographs for print meant that only highly significant and memorable depictions were included. But although the 'Pictures' item therefore made a relatively recent appearance, it has quickly formalised this particular use of popular photography and linked it to the idea of community. In these kinds of staged representations, as well as in their more recent inscription in the particular location of the Deaf community's 'own' periodical, surfaces the social structure of the Deaf community as visual drama, presented as pictures of people at the grass-roots of Deaf club membership right through to people of national renown, of births, marriages and deaths, of careers starting with a diploma to careers ending with an award. The entire social fabric of the Deaf community is here being orchestrated and organised, not in text but in the graphic iconicity of photographs. To this extent the stocks of photographs contained in *the British Deaf News*, as well as those being carefully kept in Deaf clubs and Deaf schools, form a social record as a cultural folk form which is engaged in collectively but which starts informally at the level of ordinary everyday representations (of mundane but memorable events mostly in Deaf clubs and Deaf organisations), and becomes a matter of formally (re)presented cultural folklore. As such it is:

> "...an activity both symbolising and sustaining a form of life generated by its members and significantly functional for institutional stability." (Chaney 1993:106)

In stark contrast with that which is exercised as part of editorial control, in popular photography as collective form Deaf people indeed "do what they want to do" (ibid:106) but moreover, it is done through forms which are collectively shared, understood and consolidated by a tradition grounded in a particular visual perception. The key in this form of representation is that, unlike wider photographic representation, the meanings of the photographs are socially determined by collective agreement on the expression and reading of such photography: its mode secures meanings as firmly as are those conveyed in the language of BSL, because they are both based on visual perception itself. Rather than the meanings of the photographs shifting according to a culturally shifting terrain, the photographs are being judged in terms of collective experience and language. In other words, these photographs as folk form, I suggest, are carefully located within the context of being Deaf as a collective experience rather than (or as well as) existing within a wider context of the discourses of popular photography.

In so far as the photographs present in the 'Pictures' item of *the British Deaf News* provide visual information on the social fabric of the Deaf community, they also hint at the photographic opportunity provided by, and the value that individuals append to, particular spheres of social activity: of the 61 photographs, 22 are of life in the various Deaf clubs, 10 depict sports, 8 depict family life, charity gets 6, leisure and events of a public nature receive the attention of 5 photographs each, 3 are portraits, and work and education get 1 each.

In the 'Pictures' item in particular and other, more isolated editorial photography more generally, *the British Deaf News* provides a kind of pictorial narrative which exists independently from text or occasionally serves to support or clarify text. These representations are not banal because they serve a particular purpose, that is, they inform on community matters. The information contained by them is entirely visual information and is based on agreed forms of representation and interpretation. In Alpers' terms, the photographs are descriptive and do not comment on anything other than themselves: they are self-contained bits of knowledge to be judged in terms of contexts of their own making. The popular photography used in the 'Pictures' item forms a vernacular form shared by Deaf people collectively and sustains a number of particular functions in relation to community formation and maintenance. Like seventeenth century Dutch painting, the photographs of this vernacular form are not symbolic *istorias* to be interpreted in the context of written narrative but iconic description providing its own symbolism in its own mode; they are not comments only in particular contexts, they are comments *sui generis*. Like Alpers, I conclude that this fact is to be interpreted in the context of a general 'state' of the ocular in the community in which this vernacular is being used, namely that it is indicative of the overriding importance of visual themes in the lives of Deaf people, and indicative of a form of social organisation, in the Deaf community, on the basis of visual perception. There is confirmation here that in paying attention to the photographs taken by Deaf people we see the expression of concrete knowledge of life in the Deaf community.

Subversive supplements

The new arrival of the Channel Four and *British Telecom* supplements in the 1992 issues of *the British Deaf News* marks an important presentational departure, not only in terms of opportunities to enrich the content as a result of such contributions, but also to the extent that the supplements rupture the steady development of *the British Deaf News* as a "mouthpiece" of the Deaf community. In addition to the fact that the supplements break away from traditional topics presented in the magazine, their presentation and approach are also markedly different. For example, the Channel Four supplement is subject to the same shallow rhetoric tendencies as is *See Hear! Magazines*, featuring texts which trumpet imminent broadcasts scheduled as part of Channel Four's commitment to the Deaf community and accompanied by professional photography showing mainly portraits of t.v. personalities. In fact, 24 out of the total of 42 photographs placed in the Channel Four supplement are persona records. The headline of the first item in the first Channel Four supplement snaps at the Deaf reader with the force and impoverished literary quality of the soundbite:

> "Our programme—your programme." (1992 n°4:1 of supplement)

This opening was soon followed by the handing out of free ITN key-rings to those readers willing to suggest a news topic for Channel Four's regular programme in sign language, *Sign On*. A few photographs portray either the key-ring or the lucky recipient. Articles addressed forthcoming Deaf issues which would be debated in studio discussions that month; but of the 6 photographs which accompany such articles, 5 show t.v. personalities or other contributors, and 1 shows a t.v. audience. If the headlines are constructed as soundbites, the photographs compliment their intent, since they are as void of narrative function and symbolic power as the headlines, serving merely to convey the temporality and the spectacular aspects of television viewing. Channel Four's approach to visual representation is as dependent on the image-bank as is the BBC's. To this extent, then, the shallow iconic rhetoric of postmodern imagery is being brought through the backdoor into *the British Deaf News*. The Channel Four supplement supplies, however, not only a different æsthetic, but also a different focus in terms of content. Although an in-depth discussion of that focus goes beyond the topic of study here, it is a focus on a wider community, the global community to which television typically turns. In so far as there is, for example, a discussion of the beating up of Rodney King in Los Angeles by members of the police force and the sequence of events which postdated that act of violence, such discussion is accompanied by a new type of image, that of the news-still. They may be news photographs, but they are more likely to be digitised stills from the videotapes used in television broadcasts. Both the kind of context and this type of picture are new arrivals in the pages of *the British Deaf News*.

With the *British Telecom* supplement, *British Telecom* posits an agenda different to that of Channel Four, an agenda wholly in line with corporate marketing strategies. The contributions of *British Telecom* appear more as a form of cultural colonialism of a corporate giant which enters the pages with a mere gloss of ethical considerations in its editorial choices. Although the 17 photographs in the dataset are accompanied by texts of which 5 are on charity and 4 are on d/Deaf aids, a review of the kind of topics indicates a more persistent concern on the part of *British Telecom* to display a particular engagement with Deaf people:

- "Stars get Hippodrome wired for Sound" with £3,000 donation from *British Telecom*.
- Phil Ottaway, a clerical officer at *British Telecom* in Newcastle, was taking part in the first official cricketing tour by the British Deaf Sports Council.
- Report on *British Telecom* funded interpreter scheme.
- A football ground has been equipped with a commentary box with headsets and a loop system for deaf and blind people, helped with *British Telecom* funding.
- *British Telecom* is sponsoring signed interpreting of a theatre tour.
- Report on an 'awareness day' where *British Telecom* equipment got demonstrated.
- *British Telecom* provides £1,200 for installation of sound system at Sheffield theatres.
- Report on the opening of a Jewish Deaf Association advice and resource centre sponsored by *British Telecom*.
- Report on access provision at *British Telecom* Annual Shareholders Meeting.
- One of the Sign Language interpreters, Valerie Hall, interpreting during the *British Telecom* AGM. Report on access provision at *British Telecom* Annual Shareholders Meeting.
- Report on typetalk provision for Scottish deaf *British Telecom* employee.
- *British Telecom* to test new text device for the deaf.
- The *British Telecom* employee author of a book donates royalties to RNID.
- A group of young deaf and hearing impaired people stage a *British Telecom* sponsored theatre production.

It should be clear that in all of these cases, the photographs which accompany this kind of article are being consciously framed in a different paradigm of being Deaf than that to which readers of *the British DeafNews* will be accustomed from the BDA itself and indeed from the Channel Four supplement. *British Telecom* here introduces an aspect of contemporary corporatism to which *the British DeafNews* has opened its pages, that of a public display of corporate 'concern' with self-styled community responsibilities as well as an advertised interest in the welfare of its own employees, used as elements in marketing strategy. The content of the supplement shows that there is little interest in supporting shared socio-political ideals of members of the Deaf community other than as part of a marketing strategy. That is, there is little consideration of how a corporate concern providing basic services can ensure that Deaf people will be provided with the same range and quality of those services as enjoyed by hearing people whilst being sensitive to the different modality of their primary means of communication, and, more importantly, engage in a mutually informing exchange of ideas and suggestions. In other words, Deaf people are being reminded continuously (mostly by written means, that is, outside forms of iconic representation) that they are beneficiaries of benign goodwill gestures by *British Telecom* rather than intelligent consumers with rights, most notably the right to avail themselves of technology which gives them the same quality and level of access to *British Telecom* services as everybody else. Rather than portraying the Deaf community as a social minority which is successfully challenging some of the more commonplace and taken for granted forms of communication currently exploited, Deaf people are treated with all the *égards* of the less than subtle propaganda of *British Telecom*'s good relations with the 'soft sector'. With the appearance of the *British Telecom* supplement, *the British Deaf News* has come to publicise this aspect of contemporary corporatism, a form of covert advertising revealing familiar aims in the new discourse of corporate social responsibility.

The form of the magazine: concluding a critical approach

Both *See Hear! Magazine* and *the British Deaf News* are conventional type magazines which follow conventional editorial practice in terms of presenting the information offered in their pages. Although there are differences in style, the essential form of both magazines is the same: early pages covering issues of broad interest are followed by regular features dealing with more particular content matter such as youth, products, or Deaf clubs. The ratio of text to photographs (or iconic representations of different kinds) shows that there has been little response on the part of the editorial teams to the challenges of presentation posed by the distinct visuality of Deaf people. The content of the magazines is organised on the basis of preferential treatment of written information, with iconic representation in a supporting role. *See Hear! Magazine*, although having far fewer photographs in its pages than *the British Deaf News*, is moving into a different, more stylistically popular approach in relation to the use of photographs, but the change is evasive, based on a contemporary changing æsthetic, a concern with style rather than a meaningful transgression in which the mode of presentation is adapted to suit the visual-iconic mode in which Deaf people show particular aptitude and to which their own efforts in representation seem more evidently directed (including expressive forms such as video letters, story-telling and signed poetry). In this move, photographic representations may gain quantitatively, but lose qualitatively, becoming increasingly decorative rather than informative. Although there is some evidence of experimentation with different forms of presentation in the pages of *the British Deaf News*, these experiments (the picture-stories and sign illustrations) are both incidental and accidental. They are incidental because they are rare and haphazard, that is to say that there is no relationship between the potential of a different iconography and opportunities offered for it in the texts, and they are accidental because there is no pattern of occurrence, no consistently followed choice of accompanying complex texts with larger amounts of visually articulate material. Nevertheless, the (re)presentation in *the British Deaf News* of popular snapshots mailed in by the membership is vaguely reminiscent—at least in symbolic potential—of the subversive and empowering representational practice of the Interbellum German magazine, the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*, a working-class co-operative publication published in the era of the Weimar Republic, which sought photographic contributions from among its own membership, both to raise wider awareness and to empower what was an initially silent and later silenced majority of working class people living in circumstances of considerable social discomfort and political isolation:

> "The worker-photographer movement, despite its ultimate disappearance and its inevitable haphazard documentation, offers a historic precedent for a popular move to intervene in the professional mass media's domination over public information. Its emphasis, particularly in Germany and America, on the process of educating awareness, passing on skills through their work-shops, independent of formal institutions of education, is as revolutionary as was the conscious recognition of the separate character and value of working-class culture." (Braden 1983:9)

Although entirely different in aim and scope, *the British Deaf News* shares with the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* the persistent portrayal of that which is both particular in a multiplicity of similar events and yet mundane in frequency and distribution accross the readership. In both cases, what evolved is a particular form of collective expression, paying specific visual attention to that which is considered to be significant, and that which is deemed appropriate subject matter for visual representation and shared interpretation. In both cases, what evolved is the portrayal of a particular group in contexts of its own making, grounded in collective symbolic imagination and in collective perceptions of shared actuality, history and experience. In both *the British Deaf News* and the *Arbeiter illustrierte zeitung*, the mass circulation of this collective expression constitutes an element in the formation of collective consciousness, a recognition of the idea, if not the actuality, of the working class in one and the Deaf community in the other.

The political 'moment' of the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* has been and gone. Both *the British Deaf News* and *See Hear! Magazine* exist in a publishing environment which is subject to changing technological circumstances in terms of the possible methods of production, which provide a wealth of opportunities to experiment with forms of representation and presentation, as well as being subject to changing editorial pressures, in which there is increasing tension between financial circumstance and editorial opportunity. However, I suggest that the particular kind of popular photography which contributes to the content of *the British Deaf News* is a significant cultural intervention in the contemporary 'global style' approaches to photographic representation pursued by increasingly influential institutions external to the Deaf community itself, as well as being a meaningful subversion of design policies which reflect a mounting and tendential concern with the shallow symbolic of a postmodern æsthetic.

The role of ocularcentrism in the *habitus* of being Deaf

8

"The *habitus*, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices—more history—in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms." (Bourdieu 1993:481)

"The idea of vision being socially constructed or culturally located both liberates and subsequently elevates the practising 'see-er', the human actor, from the status of messenger of nature and into the status of theoretician. In this way sight becomes properly recognised as artful." (Jenks 1995:10)

A picturesque history of the Deaf community

I have proposed in this volume that there are noteworthy social characteristics to the visuality of Deaf people, and I have suggested that the recognition by Deaf people of that visuality in others is an element in the constitution of the Deaf community. I have proposed that Deaf vision involves a variety of skills in visual perception that are social in nature, which would anticipate both neurological adaptation to social and linguistic requirements (as suggested by Emmorey et al. and Sacks, see chapter 3) as well as social requirements, and a more general visual disposition which is developed through socialisation processes and enculturation into Deaf environments; environments in which sign language use is normally a central feature. Although BSL exploits Deaf vision in creative ways it is in my view not the case that BSL can be the sole basis for either neurological adaptation in relation to visual perception (in so far as that claim is being made) or the sole motivation for cultural disposition towards Deaf vision in particular and the Deaf community in general. Equally contributive are a necessarily sustained attention to visual information *per sé*, and a resulting 'pictorial' imagination. Another likely factor not discussed here is the absence of a conventional form for the encoding and storing of knowledge in abstract patterns (such as a writing system) leading to oral and pictorial transmission of cultural information, most notably of history and personal experiences.

Similarly, the history of the Deaf community does not only have an oral component but also an important, more general 'picturesque' component. I am using this term picturesque to denote two elements in the formation of a common visual background, an illustrated history, of the Deaf community. The first element pertains to the idea that this visual history is being constructed and perpetuated in narrative forms which encode information on the basis of strong reference to iconic characteristics. This is so both in the case of forms of language expression such as story-telling, signed poetry and the signed element of theatre as well as in the case of the (comparatively recent) storage of still photographs, and the even more recent uses of video technology, and aspects of theatre production outside the language used (e.g. Padden and Humphries 1988).

But my use of the term 'picturesque' here also refers to an association of the picturesque with the portrayal of a specific constructed and lived 'past'. In postmodernity pictures are, in Baudrillard's terminology, simulacra: they are less pictures of things than things in themselves. The use of images, it is claimed, is a form of idolatry in which iconicity is made subservient to a stock of pre-received symbols by divorcing photographic content from conventional contexts, the clearest examples of which can be readily witnessed in the advertisements placed in 'avant-garde' style magazines and, increasingly, Sunday newspaper supplements. At the same time, pictures increasingly become self-referential and part of a discourse of their own making, such as photographs which look like cinematic stills or art photographs that pose as advertisements. Such use of photographs is directly at odds with the use of pictures in the context of the culturally specific and socially purposeful application of photographs as iconic referents in the Deaf community. As I have argued, the use of popular photography by Deaf people provides a particular vernacular closely aligned with the idea of the family album as vernacular form, but with a greater stress on the iconic informative qualities of the pictures, in parallel with adherence to the obvious 'having-been-there' evidential qualities of photographs. Photographs are used to describe people and events and inscribe these into Deaf history in so far as the photographs are stored in Deaf clubs or circulated privately as well as publicly in the pages of *the British Deaf News*. Among Deaf people photographs invite an interpretation based on the idea of a photograph as offering a description of something, in much the same way as a signed description (that is, language) would describe it: photography and sign language both use iconic forms of coding, and that iconicity seems to be used similarly in both modalities by Deaf people. Such interpretation of photographs is not, as some postmodern or indeed 'post-photographic' (Lister 1995) interpretations would have it, naive; on the contrary, it is a sophisticated alignment of visual information with language information into a cohesive form of framing knowledge. Such a use of photographs does not hark back to an earlier era in which photography was seen as the 'pencil of nature', providing an objective record of an inviolate reality. Rather, photography is used in the Deaf community as a form allowing for conventional coding of information. To paraphrase Arnheim, the Deaf world is not so much symbolically inviolate as iconically specific.

The fact that sign language and photographs share an equivalent form of coding makes photographs economically available for recording and storing the personal histories of individual Deaf people, and through their amalgamation into wider collections and occasional publication in *the British Deaf News*, they offer in some sense a panoramic history of the Deaf community. The picturesque history of the Deaf community is not only an illustrated history—with photography arriving comparitively late as a form of recording, and video and television being more recent still— it is also an all-embracing history in the sense that it is both formed and shared by all but those outside the peripheries of the community as well as being, in part, recorded within an unmistakable frame of reference, that of a form of representation analogous to the visible aspects of reality. Rather than being a history of a few people deemed of note, it is a history of a group, a history of the mundane and ordinary of Deaf experience. Deaf vision is thus not only a particular perception in the neurological sense, but also a particular perception in a cultural sense. To be Deaf, is the conclusion, entails not only a particular selectivity in looking at things, it also entails marked social processes in the ways in which what has been observed is evaluated, recorded, and represented—processes partly mediated by a visual/gestural language. Together I feel this provides a more comprehensive interpretation of this visual aspect of the recent term 'the Deaf way'. Deaf vision necessarily implies a construction of the world based on visual perception, an array of strategies pertaining to organising visual information, coupled with strategies in relation to forms of representation of that information, including the use of a visual/gestural language. Many of the photographs discussed in this study (particularly those of the Deaf pupils in chapter 6) are thus both social signs and individual expressions poured into a conventional vernacular form which treats them as symbolically meaningful as well as iconically specific: they are indeed descriptions of a Deaf world from a Deaf perspective.

Continuity and change: Bourdieu's *habitus*

Although photographs are a convenient tool for exploring phenomena which are visual in nature, Deaf visuality is only partly realised in the exercise of photography in particular and forms of representation in general. By way of conclusion, I will attempt in these final paragraphs to give particular status and social meaning to Deaf visuality by treating it as a structured (and structuring) disposition, a disposition which operates on a set of practical functions which together form social practice. The term for the social practice thus arrived at is Bourdieu's *habitus*, which is constituted by:

> "...systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organising actions of a conductor." (Bourdieu 1993:480).

With reference to the Deaf community, I have tried to show that the visual perception of Deaf people, itself a result of that which could be somewhat misleadingly called a 'natural' disposition towards maximum exploitation of sensual information and which is in part present as neurological adaptation of the brain to demands in relation to functional requirements (often linguistic functions), is indeed a structured disposition towards the visual in social terms also. I have provided some examples of how such a disposition can affect social behaviour and attain expression through photographic representation. In view of this I suggest that Deaf visuality (in all its aspects, including those of language use and function) operates as an organising principle in those social practices which are collectively referred to as 'the Deaf way'. Deaf visuality, understood as a particular way of seeing things and perceiving things to be, provides a 'structuring structure' which helps to bring the Deaf community together and project a (recorded) past of practical actions. This in turn provides the means and practices to be used in a likely and imaginable future, as indicated in the first epigraph to this chapter. This construction of the Deaf community as a *habitus* constituted by a set of practices engaged in by Deaf people also includes the discussion around the uses of photographs in the Deaf community in that construction and gives it meaningful expression within this particular social theory.

If the conditions that Deaf people find themselves in socially give rise to the idea of a separate and characteristic visuality, then it is also the case that these social conditions are in part the source of their own 'invisibility', including the extent to which research into 'deafness' has tended to ignore the visual themes associated with Deaf experience. This is further enhanced by this visuality being, to some extent, unconscious, exactly because it is being realised through the ordinary and often banal practices of daily life. At the same time, it is the source of the picturesque history of the Deaf community through the particular ways in which iconicity is exploited in various narrative forms and the vernacular of photography. It is therefore hardly surprising that attention to visual ability in the available literature is mostly being framed by the context of linguistic functions, where they achieve their most obvious visible expression. However, the photography of Deaf people (as reflected in the records kept in Deaf clubs or printed in the pages of *the British Deaf News*) is an instituted means of expression equally characterised by the visual disposition of Deaf people, and secures a particular historical perception of Deaf community and culture through a 'regulated improvisation' (Bourdieu 1993:483) which is both governed by and limited to that which is possible in view of the structural characteristics of the *habitus* of Deaf peoples' social environments. It is in this sense that the photographic records operate as reflections on continuity and as agents or indications of change (that is, they can affirm the status quo as well as comment in creative ways upon it). Photographs can offer thoughts and perceptions, and serve as expressions or reflections, but in all cases they, the conditions in which they are being viewed, and the possible variety of their readings, are products of a *habitus*, and therefore the limits of both their expression and their interpretation are set by the 'historically and socially situated conditions of production' (ibid:482), most notably those informed by the visual characteristics of the perceptions of Deaf people.

Outside the exploratory confinements to which the study reported here is restricted, the notion of *habitus* could help to inform discussions on much wider topics in relation to Deaf experience, including the suggestion that well-educated, successful (by both hearing and Deaf peoples' standards) Deaf people who often work in high status jobs, are fluent in English, have high incomes and many hearing friends, nevertheless continue to have strong relationships with the Deaf community and often prefer to socialise in a Deaf environment. Or it might help to account for the fact that orally educated people with little exposure to Deaf community life and Deaf peers until their late-teens or later still, may turn to socialising with Deaf people, frequenting Deaf clubs and attending Deaf activities. This 'coming out' (Jacobs 1974:36, Ladd 1988) may in part have been aided by the recognition that in entering a Deaf club, gathering or festival one enters into a particular *habitus* characterised by visual themes and a disposition towards the iconic coding of information, including that reflected in sign language expression. It seems to me that there is an urgent need to explore Deaf vision through a more sustained analysis of all the ocular phenomena associated with being Deaf—an interdisciplinary analysis which includes but is not restricted to language use and function.

Habitus and the necessity for objectivity

Bourdieu, in his discussion of *habitus*, makes repeated reference to the objective nature of the processes he describes as forming the *habitus* of a people. Bourdieu appears to undertake, in his underlining of the objective nature of the processes, a wilful attempt to rescue something of the sovereignty of the social scientist he so criticises as party to the untenable tenets of positivist traditions (a criticism along similar lines as those raised in chapters 1 and 2). It might strike us that without Bourdieu's call for objectivity there is no longer the possibility of an ontologically separate status which can mark out a distinct and somehow 'divorced' role for the professional social scientist, at least to the extent that his task in a way is to raise into consciousness that which is otherwise hidden within the complexity of the *socius*, and thus there can be no special knowledge, or at least no scientific knowledge, to mark the contribution of sociology as a science. Therefore Bourdieu retains the possibility of objectivity, of knowledge which has universal value, by shifting it from the position of the social scientist to the macro theories of social science itself, in this case to the governing structures of social practice, which places upon these structures a quality (and status) similar to that of natural laws. But I can see no such clear boundary between the objective and the subjective as Bourdieu suggests exists between *opus operatum* and *modus operandi*, that is, between the social phenomena and cultural product on the one hand, and the practices and dispositions through which they are constituted, the *habitus*, on the other, in so far as the latter is taken to be the hidden, 'objective' social structure which sources, in the constitution of daily lived activity, the 'incorporated products of historical practice' (Bourdieu 1993:480) of the former.

Within the context of a discussion of *habitus* as in part resulting from something as fundamental (in terms of access) as visual perception—a visual perception as sensual awareness which is at the cradle of conscious awareness and organisation of the world—presence of such objectivity cannot simply be asserted as a prerogative of external authority, not even in processes which are otherwise, through their banality and historical inevitability, taking place as unconscious practisces. At the end of chapter 3, I have argued that a visual conceptualisation (and realisation) of knowledge is based on a different mode of thinking, as thought processes based on immediate iconic perceptions rather than on generic abstractions[1], leading to different techniques of knowing. My discussion of Alpers was intended to convey just how profoundly different the visual representations of a society could be if that society was judged to be based around such a different modal approach to and treatment of information and knowledge. To my mind there is an impossible dichotomy between a social science which stakes such claims to 'objectivity' whilst being largely based on verbal processes and their associated processes of thought (despite the potential of visual data and the opportunities of new technology which might in due course allow for the presentation of research in sign language), and the *habitus* of Deaf people which is based on a visual approach to worldmaking and on perceptual thought processes. If the kind of thought processes which are common to social science (as well as itslanguage and forms of recording and representation, in other words an important part of the toolkit of the social scientist), differs from that which is common among Deaf people, then claims in relation to 'objectivity'—even in so far as they are being made not on behalf of the scientist but instead are 'shifted' to somewhere within the domain of social theories themselves (such as the structural processes involved in *habitus*)—become entirely spurious claims. Or, it appears to me that science can proceed only according to that which is possible as a result of its own *habitus*. Instead it seems to me to be entirely legitimate to acknowledge the subjective nature of any position that could be taken as long as there is some means by which the position held can be identified (but see Marcus 1986 for a discussion of ethnographic problems in constructing a text which reports on 'localised' research projects informed by holistic theory). The concept of *habitus*, as I have tried to briefly show here, is a useful one even if there is no claim being made as to the 'objectivity' and independence-no-matter-what of the site of dialectic, the *opus operatum*. The postmodern, interlocked problematisation of the sovereignty of the social scientist, the nature of visual perception, and the universal values appended to forms of representation (including writing and language itself) stretches very far indeed, but I hope that this study has contributed in some way, if not towards resolving some of those problems, then at least towards contributing to relevant debates in social science.

Habitus in the Deaf community and in 17th century Holland: a postscript on cultural expression

In chapter 3 I provided an example of how a social and cultural visual disposition can generate conditions which allow for particular expression of that visuality through social practice. In the case of Alpers' work on Dutch painting the focus is on art practice, an example of cultural produce often typified as 'high-brow' culture. However, I could as easily have focused on more sinister elements of the 17th century Dutch preoccupation with visual perception, in the sense that practices in for example the *tugthuis* in Amsterdam (an early precursor of the prison, and opened in 1595) provide an early reference to the Foucauldian idea of observation as control in the exercise of public institutional power and moral reform:

> "...the essence of its work was close and unrelenting observation. From their first admission to the house through their early weeks and months, the prisoners were watched to see if any signs of civic life could be discerned struggling to break free from the old crust of vice. After they passed through de Keyser's daunting gateway, new inmates would be taken to a subterranean cell, where they would be kept for a while in dark solitary confinement for observation before being visited by one of the overseers, who would acquaint them with the rules." (Schama, 1988:21)

In addition to this institutional form of moral observation there was also an element of public access, turning the *tugthuis* into a theatre where, for a copper coin, the public could watch the display of moral drama and witness public commitment to 'reformation' in full swing:

> "At carnival (kermis) time admission was free, and throngs came to gawk at these unfortunates, and in particular to jeer at the whores in the Spinhuis." (ibid:21)

The point I want to make here is that any disposition towards the visual in a social group (in this case a nation) is likely to find expression in many spheres of the *habitus*, both social and cultural, and in many different types of visual practices, including observation (in the Foucauldian sense), the public gaze, and the private visual 'caress' of æsthetic appreciation. My references to 17th century Holland have been purposefully incidental in order to discourage inappropriate speculation on possible relationships between different forms of *habitus*. The 17th century Dutch visual disposition was mainly the result of a contemporary fascination and partly scientific preoccupation with the system of visual perception in terms of its optics, its ophthalmology and its connections to thought processes and forms of knowledge. Within the Deaf community, however, visual disposition has possibly a much longer and continuous history, because it is one ultimately grounded in sensory necessity. If the Dutch visual disposition was therefore a more conscious engagement, in some areas a road of discovery, of the potential of forms of visual perception in various social practices, then within the Deaf community the visual disposition is much more unconscious and worked into social practices on more fundamental levels as well as being in part born out of necessity—witness in particular the use of sign language and Deaf people's visual cognitive abilities. Nevertheless, in a rather similar fashion to the way in which 17th century Dutch visual disposition found clear expression in forms of 'high-brow' culture such as painting, I expect that within the Deaf community there will similarly be cultural expression of Deaf vision. I have given the examples of sign poetry and story-telling, but these are artistic forms directly based in language itself. There are, in the U.K., painters, photographers and artists working with other visual media practising within the institutions of art. If their work is not marginalised together with 'other' examples of 'disabled' art, with exhibitions taking place on the fringes of mainstream public art spaces, their work is being judged and exhibited in the framework of the wider institution of British art (although there are recent exceptions). I would expect that a study which addresses the connections between the visual disposition of Deaf artists and their output would be able to make a significant contribution to debates on the social nature of visual æsthetic and artistic practice, and, of course, contribute greatly to descriptions of Deaf culture.

The perception of Deaf people

In terms of both the visual practices in which Deaf people are engaged and their abilities to express themselves in a visual modality (both in sign language and through visual representations), it is clear that Deaf people have developed the potential of visual awareness and certain kinds of visual representation to an extent where it becomes a defining characteristic of being Deaf. This 'Deaf visuality' has the quality of an ability which is shared socially (and this may, or may not find support in neurological adaptation) and has resulted in a range of visual and social conventions which find their expression among members of the Deaf community, often in creative ways. This visuality is also realised through a scopic organisation of the visual information that is found in the contexts of social spaces such as the Deaf club and the Deaf college considered in this study, and furthermore through the amalgamation of aspectual representations of community life in the Deaf club and in the pages of *the British Deaf News*, where such representations provide opportunities for the construction of a 'picturesque' history of the Deaf community. Finally, in the faculty of visual perception BSL shares with 'Deaf visuality' a rich resource for the expression and graphic depiction of experience and thought, as well as providing structural means for organising, making sense of, and communicating that experience. In analysing the experience of being Deaf, the nature of Deaf culture or the constitution of the Deaf community, it is therefore suggested that visual perception ('Deaf visuality') should be considered as offering pertinent social phenomena in its own right in addition to offering insights into the modality of sign language.

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1. An overt example found in the context of teaching, I suggest, is that occasionally in the course of a lecture Deaf students will invite clarification in the form of concrete examples rather than in the form of alternative wording. The same is true of the lecturing 'style' of some Deaf people I have witnessed. They will frequently interrupt their discussion in order to provide multiple examples borrowed from everyday events.

Appendix a

Guide to the tables

Table 1

The analysis reported in Table 1 was designed to measure the extent to which the photographer changed subject matter between consecutive photographs. For example, a photographer could be sitting at a table and quickly take two or three consecutive photographs. The expectation would be that if the photographer did not move at all between shots, all fixed features seen in the first photograph would also be in the next photograph. The only changes would be in movement, most likely by people, in front of the photographer.

Alterntatively, the photographer might have turned his or her head and the camera between photographs. In that case, the expectation would be that some fixed elements of the first photograph might still be in the next photograph, but they would be in a different place in the frame. This effect is called 'pan'. Finally, the photographer could have moved position entirely rather than just panning the camera. The expectation then would be that all elements in the photographs will be in a different location, be shown from a markedly different angle, or no longer be there at all. This camera movement is here called 'displacement'. It is clear that when there is displacement, there can be no pan, but in table 1 pan is also counted as displacement.

Proximity measures change in the proximity of camera to subject matter between two consecutive photographs, regardless of whether the subject matter has remained the same between the consecutive photographs in question.

Format is a count of how often there is a change, in consecutive photographs, between landscape and portrait formats.

The two measures of horizon are a count of how often the horizon was at an angle (judging a level horizon as 'default') or not on eye-level (judging the 'default' to be eye-level).

Location is a count of how often the photographer moved between spaces. Spaces can be different rooms, from outside to inside a building or car, et cetera.

Subject matter is self-explanatory to the extent that it is a most general interpretation of what is being photographed. Changes include from people to nature, from a minicom-conversation to a dining room situation, and from people walking to a pub to a photograph of the bar-maid. In the latter case there is a change in subject matter on the basis that from a photograph of people walking down a street it cannot be predicted that they will go to a pub, and therefore a change in subject matter must be assumed.

Amount of ***peripheral information*** is a measure of change in the level of detail provided in the background between consecutive photographs. For example, one photograph can show people talking against a background full of fine detail, whereas the next photograph can be of a coca-cola machine against a white wall. Peripheral information is therefore a measure of the extent to which background is continuous to help 'anchor' the subject matter across consecutive photographs.

Continuity is a comprehensive judgement on the simple basis of the presence of visual elements. If, from one photograph to the next, central elements or the background have been retained there was judged to be continuity between the photographs in question. Change in continuity therefore equals discontinuity.

Overall, the measurements reported in this table form an indication of how the focus and attention of the photographers were distributed in the course of the events which have been portrayed. The items on the variables are all nominal values, that is, they only count whether there was, or was not change between consecutive photographs in each variable. The statistical significance reported is a Pearson chi-square calculation conducted in the software programme SPSS. The measure of significance is only an indication of the extent to which there is difference over the critical variable (that is, whether the photographer is Deaf or hearing). There is no indication of the strength of the relationship between being Deaf/hearing and any of the variables, and equally there is no indication of the extent to which the critical variable accounts for the differences which have been calculated. The levels of significance found in this table have therefore not been treated as a source for investigation or explanation. Rather, the statistical element is here provided simply as offering support for the qualitative analysis which has been reported in chapter 6.

Finally, in content analyses of photographic representations there can be no hope of being able to design variables which are mutually exclusive, exhaustive and which would be scored in full agreement regardless of who attends to them. The only photographic content that could be measured with such accuracy is a judgement of whether the print has been exposed and developed or not. The nature of the variables in all the tables is therefore different from the kind of variables that measure the outcome of processes subject only to what are understood to be natural laws, in that they are entirely contingent upon human faculties, and they should be judged accordingly.

Table 2

This table reports on an analysis of measures which are indicative of the portrayal of people in the photographs taken by the pupils. The first measure, people as subject, is a count of how many photographs have people as subject matter. If people happened to 'be caught in the frame', but the central focus of the photograph was clearly a tree and the people were by comparison so small that an opinion on gender and age could not be formed, then the photograph was counted as not showing people as part of its subject matter.

Known persons is a count of photographs of people who appeared to know, and be known to, the photographer. This judgement is not only based on framing, but also on apparent response by the subject as well as on the basis of contextual information such as location and comparison to other photographs in the set.

Portraiture is a count of photographs which were apparently intended solely for the purpose of making a record of one or more persons. That is to say, they are not photographs of situations in which people happen to be present or be doing things, but rather there is a focus on the photographic moment, a mutual recognition on the parts of photographer and subject(s) that the attention of the photographer is to the person(s) in question.

Eye contact is a count of the number of photographs which showed people returning the gaze of the photographer/camera.

Explicit action is a count of the number of photographs in which people perfomed an action in front of the camera, and action which goes clearly beyond the simple smile or pose; examples are signing, being engaged in a sporting activity, walking, eating, et cetera.

Signs is a count of the number of photographs in which there is an indication that a manual gesture is being captured. This can simply be the 'thumbs up' sign, but can also be hand movement which cannot be recognised as a lexical item but does appear to reflect a moment in sign language expression.

Dynamic force is an indication of a response to the photograph being taken which requires the subject to engage the viewer (or photographer) directly. Examples are people signing directly to the camera, joking with the photographer by behaving in an a-typical manner such as ducking away or sticking out a tongue, et cetera. This variable refers to what I have termed 'demonstrative function' such as association and appeal (Gandelman 1991). Such often indexical function comes close to the idea of 'speech acts' in pragmatic linguistics (see Austin 1972, Grundy 1995), when it is argued that all demonstrative functions are illocutionary acts (cf. Gandelman 1991).

Foregrounding is an indication of isolation of portrayed people from their physical context. In photography such framing is often referred to as 'foregrounding' the subject. It can be accomplished most easily (or accidentally) in two ways: a close camera proximity to the subject which leaves little space for the background and often puts it out of focus, or by flashing onto a nearby subject placed far enough away from a background for that background not to be lit by the flash.

The items on all the variables are nominal values, indicating presence or absence of what was being counted. Therefore the statistical analysis was conducted as that indicated for table 1 above.

Table 3

This table differs from the previous table mainly in two ways. First, the dataset was limited to the photographs that were selected by the pupil-photographers as constituting the four favourite photographs among the photographs taken with the camera in their care. This awkward phrasing aims to take into account that in isolated instances pupils handed their camera over to someone else, mostly to have their own photograph taken. Second, a number of the variables have been given ordinal values so that a Mann-Whitney **z**-test could be computed on SPSS. This test calculates a mean for the values in each variable, and relates the actual values of the items on the variables involved to the expected response for each item based on the mean value. What results is an indication of differences between being Deaf or hearing and the expected values in each variable. Therefore the measure of significance is judged to be an indication of the strength of the relationship between each variable and the critical variable. Significant findings are therefore significant by comparison to a general, undifferentiated population (the mean expected values). However, despite significances in this test constituting a more convincing indication of a relationship between being Deaf and the variables involved than do the results of the Pearson chi-square test, it should also be taken into account that the number of cases has dropped significantly, from 228 to 38 in the hearing pupils' dataset and from 211 to 27 in the Deaf pupils' dataset.

The intention behind the analysis reported in this table is not only to corroborate the findings of the analysis conducted over all the photographs reported in the previous table, but also to overcome, to some extent, unknown external variables which arise from the conventional nature of taking and looking at photographs and which cannot be controlled methodologically.

In so far as the variables differ from the ones discussed in relation to the previous table, their list of items will provide sufficient clarification as to their meaning and intent.

Table 1

Continuity in hearing and Deaf pupils' photographs

Please note: what is recorded are *changes* between consecutive photographs (ordered by negative number) in camera movement and recording choices, and a judgement of continuity between photographs.

Variable	hearing pupils (total 228)		Deaf pupils (total 211)			
	n°	%	n°	%	Pearson x^2	p
Camera movement						
Displacement	185	88	169	74	12.89	.00033
Pan[1]	13	6	33	14	21.77	.00002
Proximity	127	60	97	43	13.65	.00022
Format	56	26	34	15	9.09	.00257
Horizon not horizontal	14	7	26	11	3.40	.06485
Horizon not eye level	61	29	37	14	13.57	.00023
Recording choice						
Location	62	29	37	16	10.16	.00143
Subject matter	40	19	56	28	2.01	.15582
Peripheral information	47	22	27	12	8.51	.00353
Continuity[2]	125	59	28	12	106.43	.00000

1. Camera pan is scored only when there is no camera displacement. Pan is a rotating movement of the camera while holding it in the same location. Since pan can only be spotted if there is clear overlap with the previous photograph it follows that an indication of pan (both change and no change) also indicates continuity. Pans which run outside the previous frame (say an arc exceeding 180°) are not scored as pans.

   Because of the relationship between Pan and Continuity they were used for agreement scoring: on the first count the 2 variables showed an error of 4 on the total of 439, an agreement of 91%. After review all errors were resolved.
2. Continuity was only scored as unchanged when something of the foreground, or a central orienting element in the photograph had been maintained in the following photograph. There was also judged to be continuity when there had been a clearly detectable pan, retaining part of the elements of the previous photograph through overlap.

Table 2

Portrayal in hearing (total 228) and Deaf pupils' (total 211) photographs

Variable	hearing pupils		Deaf pupils			
	n°	%	n°	%	Pearson χ^2	p
People as subject	189	83	184	87	1.54	.21440
Known persons (not 'the public')	147	64	177	84	4.45	.03490
Portraiture (posing)	20	9	78	37	51.92	.00000
Eye contact	38	17	110	52	55.23	.00000
Explicit action	101	44	88	42	.36	.54440
Signs	13	6	39	18	21.39	.00000
Dynamic force	13	6	56	27	34.99	.00000
Foregrounding	88	39	63	30	1.84	.17475

Table 3

Portraiture in hearing (total 38[1]) and Deaf pupils' (total 27[2]) 'preferred' photographs

Variable	Item	hearing pupils	Deaf pupils	Pearson χ^2	z-test (n=65)
Gender representation	male	17	9	χ^2 5.50	
	mixed	8	13	p .06381	
	female	13	5		
Type of activity	mere presence	15	7	χ^2 5.14	
	interaction (not with camera)	18	10	p .07625	
	interaction (with camera)	5	10		
Body orientation	facing away from camera	16	7	χ^2 1.81	
	some are facing camera	9	8	p .40436	
	most are facing camera	13	12		
Body framing	face	1	1	χ^2 6.30	z -2.06
	torso	18	21	p .04264	p .0394
	body	19	6		

(Table 3: Portraiture in hearing and Deaf pupils' 'preferred' photographs, continued)

Variable	Item	hearing pupils	Deaf pupils	Pearson x^2	z-test (n=65)
Gestures	none	35	18	x^2 6.90	
	popular signs	1	2	p .03175	
	complex gestures	2	7		
Affect (dynamic force)	low	17	1	x^2 13.32	z -3.11
	normal	12	14	p .00128	p .0019
	high	9	12		
Eye contact	none	22	7	x^2 6.55	
	between subjects	6	8	p .03777	
	with camera	10	12		
Enacting quality	unposed	33	18	x^2 3.82	z -1.9
	some posing	2	4	p .14760	p .0571
	posed	3	5		
Peripheral information	none or little	2	4	x^2 1.72	
	moderate	17	11	p .42300	
	high	19	12		
Camera proximity	more than 10 feet	13	5	x^2 4.12	z .33
	between 5 and 10 feet	13	16	p .12730	p .7372
	less than 5 feet	12	6		
Framing of presence	peripheral	8		x^2 9.40	z -2.9
	normal	20	12	p .00906	p .0036
	prominent	10	15		
Composition	frontal	36	41	x^2 7.64	
	peripheral	46	18	p .05385	
	central	18	41		

1. Two preferred photographs were deleted from the hearing pupils' set because they did not represent people.
2. One photograph was deleted from the Deaf pupils' set because it did not represent people. Two pupils did not indicate preference, and in the case of another pupil the negatives could not be printed due to an error made at the processing plant.

Table 4

Topic agreement in *the British DeafNews* and *See Hear! Magazine*

Please note: the 'Articles' column is a count of how many photographs were placed in articles with the listed topics.

Topics	Photographs	Articles	Agreement
Public life (events, persons)	158	87	41
Personal life (biographies, obituaries)	n/a	78	–
Family life	34	7	7
Family in public life	10	3	
Persona record	175	n/a	–
Work	36	3	5
Education	51	61	34
Sport	53	47	39
Leisure	10	9	3
Health	7	14	7
Arts (including cinema)	25	25	17
Television	n/a	27	–
Deaf club (society, sports club, church)	57	36	23
Deaf organisation	n/a	109	–
Charity	13	8	6
Sponsoring	n/a	13	–
Language	n/a	3	–
Interpreting	20	5	1
Deaf issues	n/a	114	–
Deaf aids (inc. typetalk, captioned videos)	n/a	62	–
Object record	57	n/a	–
Sign record	7	n/a	–
total	713 (100%)	713 (100%)	179 (25%)

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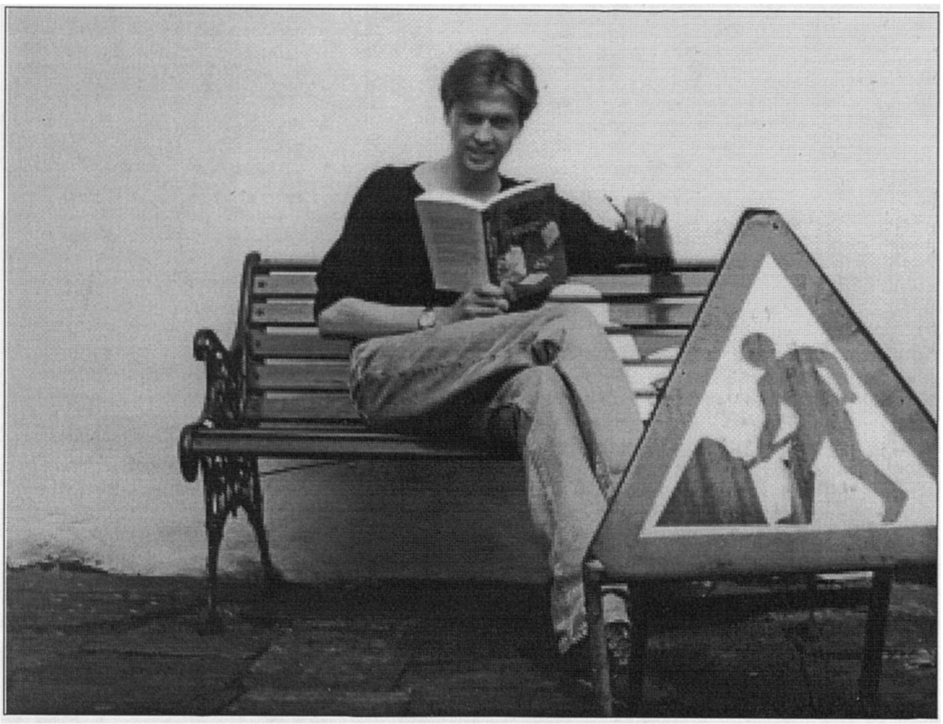

Ernst Thoutenhoofd. *Photograph by Anne de A'Echevarria.*